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COLLEGE READY HISPANIC STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

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by

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Dedication

This Dissertation is dedicated to my loving husband, Dr. Emilio Castro. He was a first generation Hispanic college graduate. His unconditional love from the past 10 years has been my rock, my center. He was by my side as I battled breast cancer and continued to challenge me to reach beyond what I thought I was capable of. I wouldn't of finished without him, even when I had given up on myself, he never did.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to both of my parents, the late Mr. David Clemente Chapa and Mrs. Consuelo G. Chapa. Both were Hispanic students that worked their way out poverty for a better life for themselves and their children. My father experienced racism all through high school, yet still persevered with a college degree and master's degree. He was a first generation Hispanic College student and paved the way for so many others to reach their goal of a college degree.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my two children, Anica Mata and Emilio Castro III. I'm so very blessed to have such amazing children. They are my rock. I hope they both see their father and me as an example of what to strive for.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Rueben Olivarez, he continued to believe in me, to push me and has been such a strong support through out this journey.

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Abstract

COLLEGE READY HISPANIC STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION

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In 2017, Hispanics had the lowest percentage of earned bachelor degrees awarded. Additionally, graduate or professional degree attainment for U.S. Hispanics was 13.2% compared to 37.2% for Non-Hispanic Whites, 22.4% for African Americans, and 57.7% for Asian Americans. Hispanic students had a high rate of remedial course enrollment as well. The impact of a growing, undereducated Hispanic population could prove harmful to United States and Texas economies. The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine organizational structures used to produce Hispanic students who are ready for college. Furthermore, I explored how institutional collaboration between this school district and its public institutions of higher education (IHE) partners produced college-ready Hispanic students. I examined the district's organizational structures and how collaboration between its high school and area public IHEs produced college-ready Hispanic students. The six participants of this case study were all employees of the case study public school district. All participants

held general education licenses issued by the TEA. One participant worked in the central office, one participant represented the high school campus' leadership, two participants were higher education coordinators and advisors, and two participants were dual credit and AP teachers. As the interviews and data collection ensued, the results indicated that the district's sustained success with graduating college ready Hispanic students required more than collaboration with higher education partners. The five overarching themes were College Ready School Culture, College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family, Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements, Educator Mindsets, and Higher Education Partners are Critical to Developing Students' College Readiness. The highest level of collaboration, known as coadunation, was achieved in the interdependence between the district and the IHEs. The case study school district brought the colleges and universities into the high school. Establishing structures for institutional collaboration that were effectively implemented over many years led to this district's success with college readiness among its Hispanic high school graduates. The recommendations for practice include district wide expectations for the mindsets of educators. The recommendations for research include additional needs for examples of effective alignments between IHEs and school districts.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Hispanic group has been the fastest growing ethnic population in the United States but also has been the least educated (Ryan & Bauman, 2015). The Hispanic population in the United States grew at a rate of 43% from the year 2000 to 2010, growing from 35.3 million to 50.4 million nationwide (United States Census Bureau, 2011a). At the time of this study, the Hispanic population was at 58.9 million, growing 8.5 million since 2010. The change represented 66% in growth since 2000, confirming the Hispanic population as the fastest growing ethnic or racial minority in the United States. The number of Hispanics added to the nation's population between July 2015 and 2016 was 1,131,766, which was more than half of the approximately 2.2 million people added to the nation's total population during this 1-year period (United States Census Bureau, 2017). According to United States Census Bureau (2017), in 2016, Hispanic residents reported the lowest percentage of bachelor, graduate or professional degree attainment at 13.2% compared to 37.2% for Non-Hispanic Whites, 22.4% for African Americans, and 57.7% for Asian Americans.

The need for Hispanics to be educated and able to contribute to the economy has been illustrated by the population data on Hispanic growth in the United States and Texas. Nationally, Texas has been one of the top states in overall population growth. From 2000 to 2016, the population growth in Texas increased by 10.8%. Table 1 shows the top six states in population growth over a 16-year span compared to the national statistics (Texas Demographic Center, 2017).

Table 1

Six Most Populated States Compared to the Nation in Descending Order with Populations Reported in the Millions

Location	2000	2010	2016	*N* Change 2010-2016	% Change 2010-2016
Nation	281.4	308.7	323.1	14.3	4.7
Texas	20.8	25.1	27.8	2.7	10.8
California	33.8	37.2	39.2	1.9	5.4
Florida	15.9	18.8	20.6	1.8	9.6
Georgia	8.2	9.7	10.3	0.6	6.4
North Carolina	8.0	9.5	10.1	0.6	6.4
Arizona	5.1	6.4	6.9	0.5	8.4

Going from the national to the Texas state level, the Hispanic population has been growing at a rapid rate since the 2000 census (United States Census Bureau, 2017). In Texas, the Hispanic population grew approximately 42% from 2000 to 2010. The state's Hispanic population is projected to grow by 57.5% by 2030 (Texas Demographic Center, 2017). Table 2 illustrates the locations of the largest Hispanic populations with the greatest population gains in 2017 as occurring within the largest Texas counties. The Hispanic population gains were compared to the Non-Hispanic White population in the table; this comparison highlighted the extent of the 2017 group growth differences between both groups.

Exemplifying the Hispanic population growth were birth to death ratios. In Texas, Hispanic birth rates were nearly seven births to one non-Hispanic birth (7:1).

Additionally, if half the migration rate into Texas, for Hispanics, reflected the 2000 to 2010 censuses and continued a similar projection until the 2040 census, the Non-Hispanic White population of Texas would be projected to be 12 million while the Hispanic population was likely to become approximately 18 million, or 49%, of the total projected Texas population of 36.5 million.

Table 2

Comparison of 2017 Hispanic Population Changes to Non-Hispanic White Population Changes for Five Most Populated Counties in Texas

Texas County	Non-Hispanic White	Hispanic
Hidalgo	7.0%	91.3%
El Paso	13.1%	81.3%
Bexar	28.7%	59.5%
Harris	31.0%	42.0%
Dallas	30.6%	39.5%

Furthermore, the same general trends were mirrored nationally. Relative to school-aged children enrolled in Texas public schools from 2000 through 2018, Hispanic student enrollment increased from 39.0% to 52.4% of the total statewide student population. Within the Hispanic population, economically disadvantaged children attending Texas public schools increased by 54.1%, but Non-Hispanic White children's economic disadvantage increased by only 9.1%. In other words, over half of the Hispanic student population was economically disadvantaged (Texas Education Agency [TEA], 2017).

Further, a review of secondary high school students within the age group of 14 to 18 years of age in Texas, revealed that 50.4% of this age group was Hispanic. Of the total population of dropouts for this age group of 9th through 12th graders, 61.9% were Hispanic in the 2016-2017 school year (TEA, 2017). Additionally, the number of Hispanics in Texas of college going and workforce entry age of 18 to 24 years was at 40% in 2000, mirroring that of Whites who represented 43% of the total population of the state. Murdock (2017) predicted that if birth and migration trends continued, in 2040, Hispanics of the 18- to 24-year-old group would represent 66% of the state population, while their White counterparts would drop to 20% of the state population. Therefore, approximately two thirds of students entering college and workforce age could be Hispanic. Not only were the numbers of residents in Texas aged 18 to 24 years expected to increase, but also the percent of Hispanics being high school dropouts for this age group were expected to increase. Even if this rate remained at 61.9% through 2040, two out of every three dropouts would be Hispanic therefore continuing the high school diploma gap and college access gap for this student group.

As a state, if Hispanic students, as the fastest growing school age population, continued to lack college degree attainment, the trend could deleteriously impact the Texas Economy into the middle part of the 21st century (Murdock, 2017; Schneider, Martinez, & Ownes, 2006; Texas Demographic Center, 2017). Underscoring this problem, Schneider et al. (2006) provided insight on the educational experience of Hispanic students by stating the following:

> The educational experience for Hispanic students is one of accumulated disadvantage. Many Hispanic students begin formalized schooling without the economic and social resources that many other students receive, and schools are often ill equipped to compensate for these initial disparities. As Hispanic students proceed through the schooling system, inadequate school resources among other factors such as language barriers, continue to undermine their academic success, resulting in Hispanics continuing to suffer from some of the highest high school dropout rates and lowest college degree attainment in the country. (p. 231)

The TEA (2010) set the expectation for all high schools to prepare their students to graduate high school as college or career ready. Given that the fastest growing ethnic population was the least college ready and makes up the largest percent of students who drop out of high school, the Texas school system could no longer ignore the educational needs of this critical population. As public schools worked to balance the new state accountability standards, they bore the responsibilities of producing more college and career ready students. Texas public education needed to make drastic changes to serve this rapidly growing population effectively and to ensure they were able and poised to contribute to the state's economy.

Carlson and McChesney (2015) analyzed trends in the wealth gap and education attainment and concluded that higher education level achievement leads to higher income earnings. Furthermore, they revealed that as college degree attainment level kept pace with inflation, it did not enable an increase in standard of living. Carlson and

McChesney stated, “a Bachelor’s Degree is the *minimum* degree attainment level needed to maintain standard of living and not lose buying power” (p. 44). With the population of Hispanic youth dropping out of Texas high schools, Hispanic children were not only not earning high school diplomas but were less prepared to have a readiness for an education level to maintain a reasonable standard of living. The consequences of a broken pipeline to college could yield severe economic and social implications for the State of Texas if the increase in Hispanic students not finishing high school, and therefore not completing college, continued without intervention. The Hispanic student population in Texas clearly faced numerous obstacles in attaining a high school diploma and even greater challenges in obtaining a college degree. To identify the challenges facing Hispanic students, identification of existing problems with the state’s expectation of college readiness for all high school graduates is presented.

Unprepared for College

One of the persistent problems confronting Higher Education involved too many students graduating from high school unprepared to succeed in college (Conley, 2005; Colton, 2006; Domina, 2007; Tierney, 2014). Conley (2008) stated that the primary complaint from college professors was that students entering college were ill prepared. Conley defined college readiness as the “level of preparation a student needs in order to enroll and succeed, without remediation, in a credit-bearing general education course” (p. 4). The concern for students’ college preparation was not without merit, given these statements.

The United States made strides in opening up college opportunities and access to more students, particularly with the growth in enrollment at community colleges. With this growth of educational opportunity came an influx of students, not all of who were necessarily ready to meet the academic rigor of a college level institution (Schak, Metzger, Bass, McCann, & English, 2017). In 2000, the U.S. Department of Education reported that more than one-quarter of freshmen attending 4-year universities and nearly half of those attending 2-year colleges did not persist into their second year of college enrollment. Additionally, Kirst and Venezia (2004) of the American Council on Education concluded 4 years later that 41% of students who earned more than 10 credits at a 2- or 4-year school never completed a 2- or 4-year degree. In 2004, nearly 40% of U.S. students in 4-year colleges took at least one remedial course (Chen, 2016). Almost 10 years later, Tierney and Sablan (2014) found that approximately 40% of college freshmen were still unprepared for collegiate level courses in at least one and possibly more of the following core subjects: reading, mathematics, science, and English. Participation in remedial courses for core subjects was more common among several demographic groups, including Hispanic students (Colton, 2006; Fry & Gonzales, 2008; Schak et al., 2017; Tierney, 2014). Among all beginning postsecondary students, an estimated 58% of Hispanic students had to enroll in at least one remedial course when entering college (Schak et al., 2017).

Texas attempted to close the college readiness and enrollment gap by 2015 but fell short of the goal (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2000,

2016). Additionally, efforts by the 83rd Texas Legislature in 2013, along with decades of state legislative measures to address access and equity for Texas school children led to the passage of House Bill 5 (HB5) to meet the college and career readiness demands and challenges. HB5 stipulated that public schools needed to more accurately reflect a college and career readiness culture through the expansion of curriculum options for students, the reduction of standardized testing, and the enhancement of school accountability (TEA, 2017). These types of outputs initially provided the structure and guidance that schools needed to streamline a successful student pathway aimed at preparing them for a college and career choice. The THECB (2015) set a *new* 15-year long-range strategic plan called 60x30TX. The overarching goal for the 60x30TX required "60% of Texans aged 25 to 34 years old will hold a certificate or college degree by 2030" (THECB, 2015, p. 2).

In the 60x30TX strategic plan, the Hispanic population was noted to be the fastest growing group and the most underrepresented group in Texas higher education (THECB, 2015). THECB (2016) determined that the number of Texans holding a certificate or college degree did not overcome the state's deficit in skilled workers. Whereas Texans saw an increase of workers and the state met some goals in the Closing the Gaps by 2015 plan, only 35% of all 25- to 34-year-old adults held a 2-year degree or higher in 2013 (THECB, 2016). By including postsecondary certificate attainment to this group, the percent of postsecondary participation rose only to 38% (THECB, 2016).

Although Texas made strides toward increasing postsecondary participation since 2000, the link between the number of Texans holding a certificate or degree and the

state's deficit in skilled workers remained out of balance (Carlson & McChesney, 2015; Texas Demographic Center, 2017; THECB, 2015, 2016). Preparing students to enter community colleges and universities and supporting them through the completion of certificates and degrees required demonstrating that higher education remained the best path toward increased socioeconomic mobility and status (Carlson & McChesney, 2015; Moore et al., 2010; Murdock, 2017; Texas Demographic Center, 2017). Murdock (2017) contended that the future of the Texas economy relied on the success of its Hispanic population. The high percent of Hispanic high school dropout rate could be attributed to problems with the state's high stakes accountability system in which graduation eligibility was closely coupled with statewide test performance (Heilig, 2011).

Higher Education Expectations and Public School Curricula

The lack of educational alignment between public schools and postsecondary educational institutions has been an ongoing challenge in the United States (Boswell, 2000; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; THECB, 2000, 2015; Tierney, 2014; Welton & Williams, 2015). Kirst and Venezia argued in 2001 that attempts to provide mass education at both public school and IHE levels have historically resulted in disconnections between both systems. Evidence of the disconnections between K-12 schools, and more specifically, comprehensive high schools, and IHEs can be seen in the inconsistencies between both systems' institutional policies and practices. The lack of alignment between high school graduation standards and college admission requirements was a notable problem for student seeking postsecondary opportunities. Generally, high school graduation has

required students to engage in less learning than the learning requirements listed by IHE admissions offices. This differential has implied a more rigorous standard for college preparedness at the high school level should be required to ensure college success for high school graduates (Conley, Hiatt, McGaughy, Seburn, & Venezia, 2010; Moore et al., 2010; Royster, Gross, & Hochbein, 2015).

Nonetheless, public schools and IHEs have become inextricably linked, and the actions and problems of one affect the other. However, the lack of collaboration between K-12 and IHE policy makers has been continually problematic for ensuring all high school graduates can succeed in college (Harris, Bush, & Arvidson, 2003; Hawthorne & Zusman, 1992; Royster et al., 2015). The disconnection involved Texas' public high schools and IHEs operating under two independent governing agencies and structures. The TEA and THECB governing bodies' disconnection hampered the functionality of teaching and learning across educational levels. A number of researchers in the field pointed out that the difficulty in establishing a seamless educational continuum was largely due to differences in curricula scope and sequence between K-12 and higher education and in the accompanying assessment standards (Hamilton 2010; Harris et al., 2003; Hoffman & Vargas, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2004; Maeroff, Callan, & Usdan, 2001).

During the last 15 years, the curricular divide between public K-12 schools and IHEs led to institutional collaborations for aligning an articulated P-16 curriculum (THECB, 2015). While this need gained recognition, the respective institutional systems

continued having major challenges that prevented effective collaboration. Current literature in this field implied the need for several channels with direct linkages that could connect the K-12 and IHE systems and attain a higher level of success in preparing students for higher education (Maeroff et al., 2001; Kezar, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Kirst & Venezia, 2004). In Texas, THECB Commissioner Raymond Paredes identified the lack of cohesion between the two educational levels as part of the Closing the Gaps by 2015 document as follows: "Problems such as lack of preparedness for incoming freshmen, lack of minority representation in colleges seem to be direct consequence of the lack of coordinated standards and alignment that sends confusing signals to students and educators alike" (Hamilton, 2010, p. 1).

As mentioned before, the new 15-year plan 60x30TX published by THECB involves encouraging collaboration between the two levels of education and measuring results by focusing on adults, aged 25 to 34 years old, to form one indicator of the likelihood of a positive economic future in Texas (THECB, 2015). In Texas, the 60x30TX plan resulted in a variety of initiatives designed to promote collaboration between public schools and IHEs. Even as P-16 alignment projects emerged, the annual high school dropout rate for Hispanic students in Texas continued to climb (TEA, 2017). Little progress has been made to coordinate systemically the many reform efforts occurring between educational levels. Without such coordination, improving academic opportunities for all students, much less the state's Hispanic population seemed unlikely.

For ameliorating the problems of P-16 alignment conditions in Texas, Texas legislature Representative Fred Brown of Bryan introduced bills in 2011. Brown introduced House Bill 104 that called for the merger of the THECB and the TEA. Brown's justification was simply that "the state needs to begin thinking of K-12 and college as part of the same pipeline instead of two distinctly different worlds" (Hamilton, 2010, p. 1). One of Brown's chief concerns involved the lack of coordination between the THECB and TEA leading to little success in promoting successful transitions from high school to college. HB 104 was read on the house floor but failed to receive the necessary votes to become law.

This legislative failure left Texas with no policy or requirement for direct communication between high school teachers and college professors or between high school administrators and college admissions staffs or even between district superintendents and college presidents (Conley et al., 2010). However, Conley et al. (2010) noted that states had begun "aligning educational expectations vertically and holding schools accountable for achieving defined outcomes" (p. 5) as part of fullfilling the mission to prepare students for success in their postsecondary lives. Essentially, Conley et al. encouraged states to engage in aligning standards and assessments across elementary, middle, and high school grades with IHE preparation needs.

The missing link was no alignment of expectations between secondary and postsecondary education (Conley, 2005). As a concept, alignment was the underlying driver behind a range of state and federal policies confined to K-12 education that were

only recently considered as smoothing the transition from high school to college. Conley's argument for alignment was applied in Texas in the statewide high school graduation requirements that included requiring students to take and pass the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End of Course (EOC) examinations. The EOC examinations contained multiple choice and essay questions to reflect the skills gained in the middle school grades and the ninth and tenth grades of high school. The EOC examinations were instituted to show high school students had attained necessary learning for postsecondary enrollments.

The state's high school assessments, however, were not used to determine students' college admission, nor predict college success; instead, the EOC examination scores showed students' mastery of high school standards. Additionally, students who desired college access needed to take additional, external corporation administered exams, such as the ACT and SAT, in order to be accepted to most 4-year colleges or universities or to be regarded as college ready by most 2-year community colleges in the state. Indeed, for community college enrollments in Texas, students were required to participate in the TSIA to show readiness when they had no ACT or SAT scores to provide.

The ACT and SAT measure students' knowledge on academic material not included in typical state-administered assessments like the STAAR End Of Course exams. High school students could pass the STAAR assessments and not take or achieve the identified minimum scores on the ACT or SAT for admission to 4-year IHEs, which

reduced their college access opportunities. This problem was why the TSIA was used at Texas' community colleges to ascertain if high school graduates were academically prepared for core college courses such as college level mathematics, English, and writing. TSIA college readiness test also covered content that was not included in students' EOC, ACT, or SAT exams. The college readiness test used at the state's community colleges required students to produce a significant amount of writing unfamiliar to most Texas high school graduates (Colton, 2006; Hoffman & Vargas, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Martinez & Klopott, 2005; THECB, 2000, 2015).

Other disconnects existed in the way state policy governed school reform. The call to transform high schools from institutions of dropout to highly functional 21st century learning environments drew considerable attention from the federal government through regulations tied to the No Child Left Behind (2002) legislation and the allocation of Title I funds (Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Standards-based K-12 education reform dramatically changed core teaching methods in public school classrooms, but at the time, had little to no affect on higher education pedagogy. Many colleges and universities still operated their courses and pedagogies under the assumption that IHEs were designed for elite students (Boswell, 2000; Colton, 2006; Domina, 2007; Hoffman & Vargas, 2005; Tierney, 2014). However, this meritocratic thinking did not enable the nation to promote more students toward becoming college ready when they graduated high school or obtaining access to resources for college readiness skills.

In 2016, at least 40% of high school graduates enrolled in remedial, or below college credit level, courses before gaining access to colleges credit bearing courses (Chen & Simone, 2016). Therefore, alignment continued to be a significant area of concern regarding the alignment of K-12 schools with IHEs requirements, given that both systems have a long history of operating like silos with little coordination. This issue received scholarly and political attention in the past (Colton, 2006; Hawthorne & Zusman, 1992; Kirst & Venezia, 2001), but few researchers examined specific models for co-constructing IHE and K-12 school alignment of instructional content standards and resources that could benefit all students, specifically Hispanic students.

In 2018, House Bill 1638 (HB1638) required statewide dual credit goals to be achieved (TEA, 2018c). The 85th Texas State Legislature passed this bill in an effort for aligning secondary and postsecondary education goals. The bill's purpose was to enable the THECB and the TEA to collaborate and develop statewide goals for dual credit programs for alignment of expectations regarding enrollment, acceleration to postsecondary education, adequate performance by high school students in college-level courses, and effective academic advising. The TEA (2018c) goals were listed as follows:

> **Goal 1:** Independent school districts and institutions of higher education will implement purposeful and collaborative outreach efforts to inform all students and parents of the benefits and costs of dual credit, including enrollment and fee policies.

> **Goal 2:** Dual credit programs will assist high school students in the successful transition to and acceleration through postsecondary education.
>
> **Goal 3:** All dual credit students will receive academic and college readiness advising with access to student support services to bridge them successfully into college course completion.
>
> **Goal 4:** The quality and rigor of dual credit courses will be sufficient to ensure student success in subsequent courses. (para. 3)

This goal mandate did not codify the alignment of content standards for high school and college curricula; high school graduation requirements versus university admissions standards; assessment alignment between end of course exams and college readiness assessments such as the SAT, ACT, and Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA). However, the TEA (2018c) set the expectation that K-12 districts and IHEs would partner and collaborate to improve students' dual credit outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Two tectonic issues affect the problem: the growing Hispanic population in Texas and the high school dropout /low college readiness rate exhibited by Hispanic students (Murdock, 2017; TEA, 2017; THECB, 2015; United States Census Bureau, 2011b, 2017). Hispanic students are on pace to represent the largest English language learner group, the largest economically disadvantaged group, and the majority stakeholder group in Texas by 2040 (Murdock, 2017). Kirst and Venezia (2004) and Conley (2005) contended that collaboration across public high schools and IHEs is needed to ensure all

students, especially Hispanic students, attain high school graduation and access to college level courses. While more and more Texas school districts seek to educate and graduate students who are ready for college, their high schools operate under a schooling model that was never designed to produce college readiness for 100% of their graduates (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). In regard to the fast growing Hispanic population in Texas and the high percent of high school dropouts from this population, more appropriate interventions need to occur to ameliorate Hispanic students' academic hurdles so they can contribute to Texas' growing economy as postsecondary educated citizens.

This problem required addressing how alignment between public school curricula and higher education readiness needs could be enhanced, as suggested by Kirst and Venezia (2004), Conley (2005), and Maeroff et al. (2001), to create a seamless transition for Hispanic students to graduate college ready from high school and to fulfill the promise of access to college for all. The lack of cohesion between these two education systems seen historically has implied the expectation of college readiness for all students has not been effectively met, and particularly not with Hispanic students. If collaborative structures existed for promoting a truly aligned high school to college pipeline, then the ideal of a college ready for all vision might be attainable for all students, including Hispanic students.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine organizational structures used to produce Hispanic students

who are ready for college. Furthermore, I explored how institutional collaboration between this school district and its public higher education partners produced college-ready Hispanic students. To fulfill this purpose, the case study was applied to one school district in Texas that produced the highest numbers of college ready Hispanic high school graduates. The following research questions were answered as part of this case study:

1. What organizational structures exist at this public school district in Texas that is graduating substantial numbers of Hispanic students who are college ready?
2. How are the organizational structures aligned with current state policies and executed to benefit Hispanic high school students' development of college readiness?
3. What formal and informal institutional collaboration strategies are being implemented between the targeted public high school and IHEs?
4. What contextual characteristics of the targeted public high school and the partnering IHEs may have contributed to the successful high school graduation and eventual enrollment in IHEs?

At the case study district and its associated central offices and campuses, I conducted qualitative interviews with key personnel who had daily, direct contact with higher education partners as part of the college readiness program. Interviews were performed with central office executive directors, principals, teachers, and higher education coordinators to learn what structures and practices contributed to their success with preparing Hispanic students for college. In addition, I conducted qualitative

interviews with key personnel within the participating higher education partners. Moreover, I accepted any artifacts offered for supporting the data obtained during interviews.

Significance of Study

Understanding the impact of institutional collaboration through organizational structures with the Hispanic population contributed to existing research on bridging the gap for this population. This researcher's findings might be used to adjust curricula provided to high school students as well as to design professional learning opportunities to better equip and train teachers, administrators, and parents for contributing to their college readiness success. These curricula and professional development adjustments could be more impactful to the alignment between high school and college expectations and curricula. Vertical alignment efforts from K-12 education and higher education via common structures, goals, and pathway alignments are critical to supporting the underrepresented Hispanic students in college access, enrollment, matriculation, and graduation.

The results of this case study defined the collaborative structures found in the data and could be applied in other high schools across the state. Furthermore, the findings might lead to improvements in public K-12 and higher education communication and coordination to augment the number of Hispanic students ready for college as a critical part in addressing the future quality workforce impact in the state of Texas. Employers tend to be attracted to areas with access to significant numbers of skilled workforce

employees, and areas with high concentrations of college bound Hispanic residents might gain economic benefits that may otherwise be unavailable without a college readiness alignment.

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was delimited to a Texas school district that reported a high Hispanic population. The district enrolled more than 77% of students as low income and 96% of students as Hispanic, and 56% of high school students were ready for college as defined by Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). As the researcher and a Hispanic female, I set aside personal bias in conducting this study to collect all data with the hope that readers from other ethnicities could receive the data as transferable.

The first assumption involved the participants being members of the staff and faculty at the participating Texas public school district. Second, it was assumed that the participants would provide truthful answers during their interviews and would answer the interview questions after signing the informed consent form. Third, it was assumed the data provided about the district would be accurate.

The limitations of the case study of college reading at one school district in Texas affected the transferability of the findings. The study was conducted in South Texas, which has a minority majority population. The district serves mainly Hispanic students of low incomes. Therefore, the findings might not apply to school district located in other geographical regions of Texas, to districts serving different income categories, to charter school districts which do not have the ability to fund buildings through bond elections,

and to districts with different compositions of student bodies by ethnicity and limited English proficiencies.

Definitions and Terminology

The terms that follow provided a foundation for important concepts of the study and a basic understanding of these concepts listed below:

Academic preparation. The set of skills and abilities essential for college readiness (Conley, 2005).

College readiness. The term means earning a high school diploma enables a student to be considered approved to earn college bearing credit without taking remedial or developmental courses at a community college/university (TEA, 2018b).

College ready graduate. The term refers to the high school graduate who meets the college-ready criteria via the TSIA; SAT; ACT; or STAAR EOC examinations in the core high school subjects of English I, English II, Algebra I, U.S. History, and Biology. Figure 1 displays the minimum criteria for college readiness according to the TEA (2018c).

Subject	TSIA		SAT *		ACT
ELA	at least 351 on Reading	OR	at least 500 on Critical Reading AND at least 1070 Total	OR	at least 19 on English AND at least 23 Composite
Mathematics	at least 350 on Mathematics	OR	at least 500 on Mathematics AND at least 1070 Total	OR	at least 19 on Mathematics AND at least 23 Composite

* For the small percentage of students who took the redesigned SAT examination, their scores were converted to the equivalent scores on the previous SAT using College Board concordance tables.

Figure 1. Criteria required for attaining college readiness by assessment.

College, career, and military ready. CCMR is a component of the A-F accountability system that includes data from enlistment in one of the four armed services, ACT, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), SAT, and Texas Success Initiative (TSI) assessment results. A high school's or a school district's CCMR component score is weighted in all three domains in the A-F Accountability System (TEA, 2018a).

End of course examination. EOC examination includes one of five state exams including the courses titled Algebra I and II, Biology, English, and U.S. History, given to all high school students to determine eligibility for high school graduation (TEA, 2018a).

Institutions of higher education. IHEs are postsecondary education centers, according to Title 3 of the Texas Education Code, that include any public technical institute, public junior college, public senior college or university, medical or dental unit, public state college, or other agency of higher education.

Hispanic. The term refers to the U.S. government's two approaches to this racial categorization. One approach defines a Hispanic a member of an ethnic group that traces its roots to 20 Spanish-speaking nations from Latin America and Spain (but not Portugal or Portuguese-speaking Brazil; United States Census Bureau, 2011a). The second approach involves an individual self-reporting as Hispanic (Pew Research Center, 2009).

First Generation Student. FSG is a student who is a first time in college student and the first in the student's generational family to attend college (McConnell, 2000).

Texas Success Initiative Assessment. The TSIA is designed to help college or university to determine if students are ready for college-level course-work in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics (THECB, 2018).

Texas Academic Performance Report. TAPR is a comprehensive annual report that measures schools and districts academic progress as well as reporting demographic data (TEA, 2018a).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine how organizational structures were used to produce Hispanic students who are ready for college. I explored how institutional collaboration between this school district and its public higher education partners produced college-ready Hispanic students. I examined the district's organizational structures and how collaboration between its high school and the public IHE partners produced college-ready Hispanic students.

The following literature review offers the theoretical underpinnings of collaboration theory as a form of an organizational structure. This chapter addresses collaboration between learning institutions as a framework to measure effective collaboration of organizations and a practice relevant in public schools and higher education. In addition, I explore the definitions of the term college ready and synthesized the research on this topic for the purposes of this study. I describe the Hispanic student, identify factors that contribute or hinder their educational progress. Furthermore, I identify the current models of collaboration used in Texas Public Schools and weigh the evidence of the impact of these models on the college matriculation of Hispanic students.

Conceptual Framework for Collaboration Leading to College Readiness

According to Maeroff et al. (2001), lack of cohesion between public K-12 schools and IHEs was rooted in the disjointed history of U.S. education policy. Maeroff et al. contended that the country's two separate systems of mass education with K-12 on the

one hand and limited-access IHEs on the other, share little to no history collaborating on the alignment of content standards and admission standards for both college access as well as college success for *all* students. In accordance, Gajda (2004) stated that collaboration among different entities, schools, communities, and businesses could mitigate pressing issues such as dwindling resources, social fragmentation, and sweeping economic changes. In reference to public schools and higher education, when researchers like Gajda argued for effective collaboration between K-12 and higher education in order for the goal of all students to be college ready, effective collaboration was not specifically defined.

Corrigan (2000), on the other hand, added specificity to this term by indicating that a great deal of the difference between cooperation, coordination, and collaboration involves collaboration producing higher levels of activity that "many organizations strive for, but few achieve" (p. 76). Even though individuals and groups can cooperate and coordinate without changing what they are doing, collaboration involves the expectation that K-12 institutions working collaboratively with IHEs must produce outcomes that individuals or organizations would be unable to produce otherwise (Corrigan, 2000). Thus, Gajda's (2004) distinctions for a collaboration continuum bear scrutiny.

Collaboration Model

Gajda (2004) postulated that the interaction for strategic alliances operates along the following four-point continuum (see also Figure 2):

- Cooperation: fully independent groups share information that supports each other's organizational outcomes.
- Coordination: independent parties align activities, events or services that support mutually beneficial goals.
- Collaboration individual entities give up some degree of independence in an effort to realize a shared goal.
- Coadunation: implies the complete interdependence of the partnering entities in an effort to strengthen a surviving organization. (p. 68)

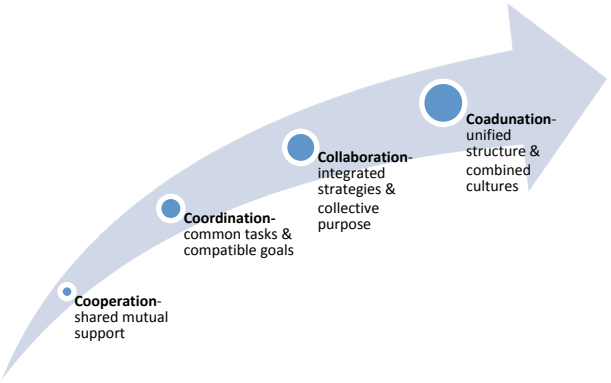


Figure 2. Defining strategic alliances across a continuum of integration (Gajda, 2004).

Effective collaboration cannot be developed overnight. It involves building trust and confidence, and that takes time. Furthermore, with each new group participating in a collaborative venture means additional help is needed for achieving goals; therefore, members of one group become agents for the other group as well (Hord, 1986). These issues requiring help include learning new habits, abandoning old ways of operation, and confronting problems that may cause misunderstanding or even resentment. Most comprehensive definitions of collaboration have referred to stakeholders describing the

common purpose and shared rules or norms and detail of pooling factors including human resources, skills, or expertise (Kezar, 2005). Wood and Gray (1991) developed the following definition of organizational collaboration: "A process in which a group of autonomous stakeholders of an issue domain engages in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain" (p. 146).

The rationale for collaboration of this type in schools, specifically public schools and higher education, was rooted in the premise that student success benefits all stakeholders by college attainment. How do secondary and postsecondary education systems participate in an "interactive process" of sharing norms and structures to make decisions that benefit both? "The literature made clear that there are indeed observed facts about the development of strategic alliances for which principles of collaboration can be derived" (Gajda, 2004, p. 67). Principles of collaboration theory include the following postulates:

- Collaboration is imperative
- Collaboration is known by many names
- Collaboration is a journey, not a destination
- With collaboration, the personal is as important as the procedural
- Collaboration develops in stages

Regardless of the definitions, terminology, or features used to describe collaboration, two common elements appeared in the literature regarding components to

effective collaboration. First, in discussing educational collaborations between secondary and postsecondary organizations, Metzner (1970), a seminal source of particular relevance to this study, noted that joint ventures between secondary and post-secondary educational institutions failed in the past because of differing goals and objectives. Stated conversely, all parties in a successful collaboration should have clear goals and objectives (Metzner, 1970). Hord (1986), Conley (2005), and Gajda (2004) concurred that institutional collaborations should include, among other things, consensus on educational goals for student success. These three authors showed clear agreement that clarity of purpose is essential for institutions seeking to collaborate successfully.

Secondly, there must be mutual benefits for parties involved in the collaboration. Gray (1989) maintained in the theory of collaboration that the existence of stakeholders' interest in a collaborative effort is a crucial element in a successful institutional collaboration. Each partnering institution must have a motive, self-interest, or benefit from wanting to participate in the collaboration. Additionally, Gray added that institutional collaboration involves the incorporation of individual institutional self-interests for producing mutually derived benefits (Gray, 1989). In recent years, researchers of K-16 reform documented the benefits of organizational collaboration as producing greater efficiency, effectiveness, and enhanced student learning (Kezar, 2005).

In the formulation of a theoretical perspective for this case study, collaboration theory allowed for discovering how the collaboration between the school district and IHEs resulted in Hispanics being more college ready. The theory was developed by

Wood and Gray (1991). Gajda (2004) developed a rubric for assessing collaboration across industries. Gajda and Koliba (2008) provided an adaptation of the model for teacher collaboration. Kohli and Jensen (2010) applied the theory to supply chains used by businesses for meeting goals and handling logistics for products. Keyton, Ford, and Smith (2012) found in multitier systems in healthcare that trust affects communication; less trust reduces communication between collaborators. Collaboration affects effectiveness between public schools and universities, businesses and non-profit organizations, and external agencies seeking to achieve similar goals. Greater collaboration leads to effectiveness in goals.

In collaboration theory, when clarity of purpose and mutual benefits of all parties involved with alignment, the process of collaboration can successfully move through the four stages of collaboration, as outlined by Gajda (2004). The ultimate goal of collaboration would be reaching coadunation, a merger between two entities based on trust or operational symbiosis between groups. Thus, the theoretical supposition was the following: Institutional collaboration enables Hispanic students to graduate from high school as college ready at higher rates (Conley, 2005; Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Figure 3 displays a conceptualization of this postulate. Using this frame to measure effective collaboration, a working definition of college ready was needed in terms of this study of Hispanic youth.

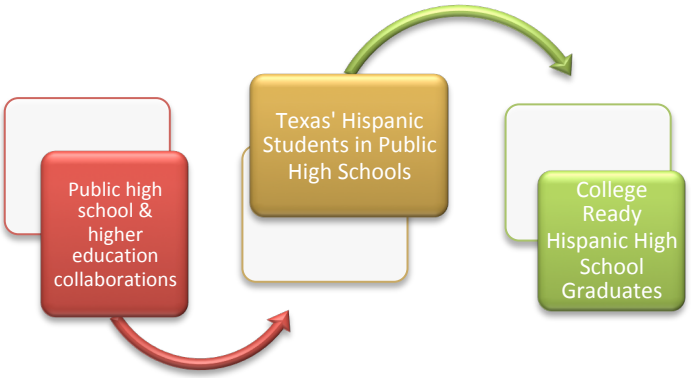


Figure 3. The process for using collaborations between institutions to benefit Hispanic high school students' college readiness.

College Readiness

As previously stated in Chapter One, the largest complaint from higher education officials is that students entering college are not prepared or college ready. When the majority of students are educated in a K-12 system that was never designed for all students to become college ready, it should be no wonder that almost half of students who enter college take a remedial course and almost two-thirds of students who enter community colleges take remedial courses (Chen, 2016). Preparing high school students to be ready for the rigorous course work of a 4-year university has been an ongoing task in Texas for several decades. Texas leaders recognized the need for more college access across the state. In 2000, the THECB identified gaps in college access and set high goals to be achieved by 2015. The plan titled Closing the Gaps by 2015 was adopted in October 2000 by the THECB (2000).

The THECB's (2000) original 15-year higher education plan was a response to pressure to increase college access and success for all students. The plan's goals included

closing the gaps between White and Hispanic students in terms of access and success in higher education. The four major areas included IHE participation, success, excellence, and research. All types of IHEs were included in the plan. These were public, independent, and career postsecondary institutions as well as 2-year and 4-year institutions. Although some goals for reducing the achievement gap were attained, Hispanics' continue to be the highest percentage of dropouts only 13.2% of college degree attainment (TEA, 2017; THECB, 2016). Of the Hispanics graduating high school and enrolling in college, TEA (2017) reported for 2013-2014 that the percent of graduates completing 1 year of college without remediation to be 70.5%, while the TEA reported that number fell in 2016-2017 to 55.6%.

Consequently, Texas' long-range plans for all students to be college ready and college complete were revised following the expiration of the Closing the Gaps 2015 plan. The problem now faced by Texas involves 61% of the state's largest and fastest growing student population, specifically the Hispanic student population, still did not attain a college degree at rates comparable to their White counterparts. Therefore, the need for Hispanic students to attain college readiness and complete college received more attention in the current Texas environment and landscape, especially regarding the current and future economic outlook for Texas (Murdock, 2017; Texas Demographic Center, 2017).

Conley (2008) exhorted that "the likelihood that students will make a successful transition to the college environment is often a function of their readiness" (p. 12).

College readiness refers to the degree to which previous educational and personal experiences have equipped high school students for the demands they are likely to encounter in college (Conley, 2008). Conley further posited that operationally, college ready involves students attaining a level of preparation that enables them to enroll without remediation and succeed in a credit bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution. Additionally, Conley described the four facets of college readiness as *Key Cognitive Strategies, Key Content Knowledge, Academic Behaviors,* and *Contextual Skills & Awareness*. Roderick et al. (2009) stated that the first two facets of Conley's model, key cognitive strategies and key content knowledge, were foundational to students' understanding of the academic disciplines specific to a given subject area. High schools must adequately prepare students not only to memorize algebraic formulas but also to analyze and solve mathematical problems using algebraic functions in order to ensure their graduates can perform as expected in college work (Rodericket al., 2009).

Conversely, some researchers and policy makers defined college-ready more quantitatively by university admission requirements such relying heavily on high school grade point averages typically combined with students' SAT or ACT scores (Moore et al., 2010). Additionally, the TSI was created to enable college or university admissions staff to determine students' readiness for college level course work in the content areas of reading, writing, and mathematics as a prerequisite for enrolling in college courses. As of 2013, in order to enroll in public IHEs, all students must be assessed for readiness in reading, mathematics, and writing (TEC 51.3062; THECB, 2018). The Texas

Administrative Code (TAC) 19, PART 1, CHAPTER 4.54 required all first time in college students to be assessed for college readiness unless the student qualities for an exemption. Each student failing to meet the minimum passing standard of the TSIA must enroll in developmental education courses that do not yield transferrable college level credit and are designed to help students reach college readiness. The TAC 19, PART 1, CHAPTER 4.54 criteria allowed students in Texas to be exempt from this additional assessment as follows:

1. Scored a 23 or higher on the ACT composite and minimum of 19 on both the English and math tests of the ACT;
2. SAT administered prior to March 2016: Earned a combined verbal critical reading and math) SAT score of 1070, with a minimum score of 500 on both sections;
3. SAT administered March 2016 or later: Evidence-Based reading and Writing minimum score of 480, Mathematics minimum score of 530.
4. End of Course (EOC) with a minimum Level 2 score or 4000 on the English III and minimum Level 2 score of 4000 on the Algebra II EOC.
5. A student who has graduated with an associate or baccalaureate degree from an institution of higher education.
6. A student who has previously attended any institution and has been determined to have met readiness standards by that institution.

7. A student who is enrolled in a certificate program of one year or less (Level-One certificates, 42 or fewer semester credit hours or the equivalent) at a public junior college, a public technical institute, or a public state college.
8. A student who is serving on active duty as a member of the armed forces of the United States, the Texas National Guard or member of a reserve component of the armed forces.
9. A student who is honorably discharged, retired, or released from active duty as a member of the armed forces of the United States or the Texas National Guard.
10. A student who successfully completes a college preparatory course under Texas Education Code 28.014 is exempt for a period of 24 months from the date of high school graduation with respect to the content area of the course.

Hispanic Public School Students

As previously mentioned, the Hispanic population has been the fastest growing student group in Texas and the nation, creating an urgency for understanding the drivers and barriers for this student group at a deeper level (McWhirter, Garcia, & Bines, 2018). To address possible causes for Hispanic students producing the highest high school dropout rate among all student ethnicities, a profile of the "typical" traits of Hispanic students in Texas is useful to review. In 2002, Padron, Waxman, and Rivera, of the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence at the University of Houston, examined the factors needed for implementing effective educational programs to serve

Hispanic students. Padron et al. acknowledged the education crisis facing Hispanic students, summarized the problems, and suggested potential solutions for improving Hispanic students' graduation rates and postsecondary readiness. Padron et al. associated the factors lack of qualified teachers, inappropriate teaching practices, and at-risk school environments with Hispanic underachievement.

Lack of Qualified Teachers

One of the most serious problems associated with the failure of Hispanic students to graduate high school resulted from a shortage of highly qualified teachers and a lack of appropriate preparation among credentialed teachers (Padron et al., 2002). As seen in Chapter One, the majority of English language learners and economically disadvantaged children in Texas were Hispanic. This disparity is significant because the majority of teachers who were teaching mathematics, for instance, were teaching Hispanic students for whom English was not their first language. Moreover, these teachers had no formal English as a second language or bilingual education training (Padron et al., 2002; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). These teachers, however, were responsible for ensuring the academic success of this high need student group. In addition, most teachers certified to teach English language learners indicated a lack of preparation for teaching mathematics to this student group.

Teaching Practices

Another urgent problem outlined by Padron et al. 92002) involved the most common instructional approach found in schools that serve Hispanic students, which was

the direct instructional teaching model. Teachers typically taught the whole class at the same time and controlled the majority of classroom discussion and decision-making. This teacher-directed instructional model emphasized lecture, drill and practice, remediation, and worksheets (Schneider et al., 2006). Haberman (1991) argued that these instructional practices constituted the "pedagogy of poverty" (p. 291) with the low performance expectations and a focus on remedial skills. Several researchers examined classroom instructional practices with Hispanic students and found that direct instructional teaching model existed in many classrooms with Hispanic English language learning, and other minority students (Haberman, 1991; Lacelle-Peterson & Rivera, 1994; Padron et al., 2002; Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). The results illustrated that classroom instruction in schools whose majority of students were Hispanic did not provide any individualized instruction that was tailored to the students' specific academic needs and often lacked any intentional cultural and linguistic strategies. This non-differentiated, direct instructional teaching model might account for Hispanic students' lack of interest and motivation in school and the high number of students in this group dropping out of high school.

At-Risk School Environments

The term *at-risk environment* implied that the school rather than the individual student should be considered at risk. Hispanic students are mostly educated at large comprehensive high schools in urban settings producing higher crime rates and housing schools that are poorly maintained. In addition, the quality of instruction in urban environments traditionally has been less than adequate for ensuring students attain grade

level standards due to classrooms led by under qualified teachers who fill vacancies and might not necessarily be highly qualified. This lack of adequacy might create for Hispanic students a culture of low expectations, poor quality instruction, and the at-risk environment. Educators began to argue that school systems, school programs, and the organizational and institutional features of the school environment must create a culture of that school (Eurich, 1982; Moore et al., 2010). A negative school culture only contributes to the conditions that influence students' and therefore inhibits their academic success (Eurich, 1982; Haberman, 1991; Moore et al., 2010; McWinter, 2018).

The Comprehensive High School

Most students, especially Hispanic students, are solely prepared for college at the large comprehensive high schools that were never created to prepare each and every high school student to attend to college (Conley et al., 2010; Eurich, 1982; National Education Association [NEA], 1918). The basic outline of the nation's high schools has not changed significantly since the rise of the comprehensive high school nearly a century ago (Toch, 2003). Prior to the early 1900s and the emergence of the comprehensive high school model, only a fraction of the nation's students, approximately 10%, stayed in school long enough to receive a high school diploma. Higher education originally served the small elite class of students who became the leaders of the country's industries and major political institutions. Leaders of the progressive movement such as John Dewey pushed to extend high school curriculum beyond traditional academic subjects and to serve more students in higher grades. This effort occurred on the grounds that doing so

would help make the American life and culture more democratic (Dewey, 1900; Toch, 2003).

These attempts, along with many others do not always stay in the forefront of the political efforts. Public education priorities can shift quickly. The NEA, as the leading public education organization at the turn of the century, established a Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. In its widely publicized 1918 report entitled the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education, the NEA declared that the main objectives of secondary education should be: "Health, command of fundamental processes, worthy home-membership, vocation, citizenship, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character" (p. 10). Soon after, high schools began to add vocational and other non-academic subjects to their traditional offerings. The rapid expansion of the high school curriculum beyond its traditional academic boundaries led to the creation of distinct curriculum paths for students according to students' needs; this practice was later known as tracking (Eurich, 1982; Toch, 2003).

Conley (2010) concurred in his research synthesis of America's high schools by reiterating that high schools in the 20th century offered a range of programs in response to student interests. High school was designed to funnel students into tracks that led to very different futures and potential careers, including some careers that required additional education and most others that did not. Students were expected to choose different courses guided by their own enlightened sense of who they are, and what they want to be when they grew up. In the comprehensive high school model, grouping

students on a particular track or program led to self-fulfilling expectations about the capabilities of differently grouped students. This utilitarian system of secondary education served the purposes of the nation's industrial economy at the time.

For most of the 20th century, U.S. socioeconomic structures accommodated the process of sorting high schools and students into college or industry tracks. High school's purpose was to sort students according to different workforce requirements. Students who left with a high school diploma had enough opportunity to find work and contribute to the nation's economy without additional formal education (Conley, 2010; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Martinez & Klopott, 2005). Postsecondary institutions taught traditional academic disciplines to develop lawyers, accountants, and the managerial class of industry (NEA, 1918; Toch, 2003).

In 1959, former president of Harvard University James B. Conant argued that only large comprehensive schools could achieve the economies of scale necessary to supply students with the wide range of course required by their diverse educational needs (Eurich, 1982; Toch, 2003). Conant called for abolishing tracks toward vocational or college preparation and to group students by ability in every subject. Class rank in all subjects needed be eliminated, Conant argued, because rank encouraged bright students to take easy courses for higher class rankings. Conant stated that college and university admissions professionals should examine every student's entire record rather than evaluating only grade point averages. Conant that called for 10 general education courses and seven elective courses, creating a seven or eight period high school day to fit all these

courses in to the 4-year high school curriculum. Conant believed when ninth grade students have only a sixth grade level or below reading ability, they needed special teachers and training to guide them toward a trade or vocation that required less than college training (Eurich, 1982). Conant's rhetoric led educators to think in terms of vastly larger high schools, which is still, for the most part, the model used today.

As previously stated, in the industrial era, when a majority of jobs required workers to use their hands rather than their heads and paid well for doing so, the large comprehensive high school, not specifically preparing the masses to be ready for college, worked fine for the time. However, the global economy required a different priority in which nearly every student is educated well enough to enter college. This college is available for access to all high school graduates was a notion that the founders of the comprehensive high school simply had not contemplated nor desired (Conley, 2005; Toch, 2003). By 2013, the Texas legislature redefined the priorities of state-sponsored public high schools by introducing HB5 (TEA, 2017).

House Bill 5 and House Bill 1638

Efforts by the 83rd Texas Legislature (2013) along with decades of state legislative measures to address access and equity for Texas school children, including Hispanic children, helped create HB5 to meet these demands. HB5 stipulated that public schools need to more accurately reflect a college and career readiness culture through the expansion of curriculum options for students, the reduction of standardized testing and the enhancement of school accountability (TEA, 2017). HB5 provided a structure and

guidance that schools need to streamline a successful pathway for students aimed at preparing them for a college and career choice. The bill's purpose was to ensure high school students received exposure to their career options to increase their likelihoods of making the best possible decision about post-secondary education based on exposure to at least one of the following five pathways: (a) business and industry, (b) science technology engineering and math (STEM), (c) public service, (d) arts and humanities, and (e) multi-disciplinary studies. More recently, the 85th Texas Legislature enacted HB1638 to require the THECB and TEA to collaborate and develop statewide goals for dual credit programs; the bill has been codified in the Texas Education Code's Section 28.009 (TEA, 2018c).

Although public schools have been directed to align their curricula and graduation plans according to the requirements of HB5, no expectation have been codified in Texas Education Code regarding how IHEs need to change or align their practices to HB5. Additionally, since the inception of HB5, efforts to implement this policy to encourage alignment and collaborative structure for college and career readiness have not appeared to be efficacious for Hispanic students. Since HB5 went into effect, degree attainment for the Hispanic population has remained under 16% for the past 10 years (Murdock, 2017; TEA, 2018d). Additionally, because HB 1638 was just recently enacted in September of 2018, it is too soon to conclude if the statewide dual credit goals would positively or negatively impact the number of Hispanic students ready for college.

Early College High School Model in Texas

The Texas Early College High School Initiative began in 2004 funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The goal and vision of this model were to improve high school graduation rates, college access and college success for student populations that are historically underrepresented in college (TEA, 2010). Since then more than 200 "stand alone" Early College High Schools serve the state of Texas with a high concentration in the Rio Grande Valley area (TEA, 2018d). The core principles of Early College High Schools are built on academic rigor, curriculum alignment towards college standards, alignment of resources towards an associate degree and four year college (Jobs for the Future, 2011). This combined with the opportunity for students to save time and money is a powerful motivator for students to work hard and meet the goals of college success (Hoffman & Vargas, 2005). These public high school located on a community college campus are designed to enable low-income youth, first-generation college goers (as a requirement for funding by TEA), English language learners, students of color, and other marginalized high school students to earn simultaneously the high school diploma and the associate's degree or the high school diploma and up to 2 years of credit toward a bachelor degree tuition free (Jobs for the Future, 2011). Early College High Schools practice institutional collaboration through meeting with partners and advisory councils with both faculties of the school districts and host IHEs.

Summary

In this chapter, the literature on collaboration theory identified the framework used for this study, defined collaboration, defined college readiness, and reviewed the current literature on Hispanic students. The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine organizational structures and the institutional collaborations between this school district and its public higher education partners produced college-ready Hispanic students effectively. In recent years, few models have emerged that practiced institutional collaboration at the level defined in this study resulted in college success. Some of these models that indicate collaboration is necessary are dual credit programs and AP courses. The model that has emerged in Texas and other states involves K-12 schools and IHEs collaborating on identifying goals that are aligned, putting a process in place for shared norms and values, and working together via daily operations toward a mutual incentive, such as college success for first generation college students via the Early College High School model.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine how the organizational structures produced Hispanic students who are ready for college. Furthermore, I explored how institutional collaboration between this school district and its public higher education partners produced college-ready Hispanic students. This chapter contains the information regarding how the case study was designed and conducted. The chapter presents an overview of the data analysis techniques used in the research process of exploring and examining the collaboration between the case study school district and its IHE partners.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose, the case study was applied in a school district in Texas that produced the most Hispanic high school graduates who were college ready. With the highest producing Hispanic college ready graduates identified, the following research questions were answered:

1. What organizational structures exist at this public school district in Texas that is graduating substantial numbers of Hispanic students who are college ready?
2. How are the organizational structures aligned with current state policies and executed to benefit Hispanic high school students' development of college readiness?
3. What formal and informal institutional collaboration strategies are being implemented between the targeted public school and IHEs?

4. What contextual characteristics of the targeted public school and the partnering IHEs may have contributed to the successful high school graduation and eventual enrollment in IHEs?

Research Design

In considering the purpose that guided this study, I used a case study approach with sequential explanatory design to undergird this study. According to Yin (2018), case study researchers investigate an empirical topic by following a set of desired procedures (p. 22). This case study involved collecting data in a school district that produces higher numbers of college ready Hispanic graduates as reported to the state by school districts. The rationale for this case study was built on the need to understand what high school or school district structures and alignment initiatives were applied to preparing Hispanic students for college in conjunction with local IHEs. I conducted interviews with district- and campus-level personnel who were key informants and responsible for executing the college readiness initiatives in the school district as well as IHEs. Key informants in the school district included central office personnel, principals, teachers, counselors, and professionals of the participating higher education partners. Moreover, artifacts that related to college readiness structures were collected for triangulation during interviews.

Population and Selection Criteria

I identified a school district in Texas that produced a high percentage of college ready Hispanic graduates by collecting and analyzing data available through the state using several considerations for this study. First, the selected school district needed a

student body composed of at least 85% Hispanic students; the selected district serves 96% Hispanic student population. Second, this district needed to meet state criteria for achieving the college readiness standard or Index 4 (TEA, 2017). Third, the rate of Hispanic students identified as college ready graduates needed to exceed 50%.

To identify the school district, data were collected from TAPR. These data were publicly available. I used the definition of college readiness provided in Chapter One for ascertaining what districts meet the selection criteria.

Data Collection and Interviews

Data collection for case study research is often much more rigorous than other methods of research, because the data are not necessarily routinized. Critical aspects of successful data collection include asking good questions, being a good listener, staying adaptive to newly encountered opportunities, possessing a firm understanding of what is being studied, and conducting the research ethically (Yin, 2018, p. 82). Therefore, the interviews were recorded for generating rich understanding of the structures in place for the school district to produce college-ready Hispanic high school graduates.

The key informants in the school district included central office personnel, principals, teachers, counselors, and professionals of the participating higher education partners. The respective interview guides for educators based on their position titles appear in Appendices B, C, D, E, and F. I conducted the in-depth interviews to learn what structures and practices contributed to the school district's success with preparing Hispanic students for college. Moreover, I collected artifacts, if they were offered by the

key informants. Any artifacts that could be used for understanding the data obtained during interviews were included in the analysis.

In addition, one-on-one interviews with key district personnel, as identified by the school district superintendent or designee, took place at a location recommended by the superintendent. Central office personnel directed me to partnering higher education professionals for interview recruitment. All participants were recruited based on key informant recommendations, and all participation was strictly voluntary. Each participant was recruited based on the assumption of the person having familiarity with Hispanic students and the programs offered at the district. Finally, all identified participants received ample opportunity to respond as freely as possible to each question during their interviews. I sought to obtain the participants' authentic perspectives of what they believed contributed to their school district's high percentage college ready Hispanic high school graduates.

Credibility

Data were reviewed for accuracy while conducting the qualitative interviews. A professional qualitative methodologist was hired to ensure reliability with the coding of the transcribed interviews. Furthermore, careful analysis took place when coding by comparing data with codes, so that meaning was not shifted away from the purpose of the study or evaluated with bias during the process. As a researcher, I used multiple strategies to triangulate between the data sources, such as school district versus higher education personnel, to build a reasoned justification of outcomes (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2018).

Case study, by definition, involves triangulation, suggesting the findings were trustworthy (Yin, 2018).

Researcher Positionality

As a researcher, I had over 25 years of experience in public education. I served 12 years as a teacher in a high school with high poverty and majority Hispanic student population. I was a high school principal in a large urban district in Texas as well as a principal of an Early College High school. In addition, I served as central office administrator in a high poverty, majority Hispanic student school district.

I acknowledged the potential biases that might exist due to my past service as a principal of a large of a high school with a high population of Hispanic students, a current central staff administrator that served in a district of 90% Hispanic students, and a current doctoral student at the University of Texas at Austin. As data collection was conducted, I logged entries in a journal throughout the study in addition to any field notes I wrote to reflect upon my potential biases. The perceptions of how key personnel viewed factors affecting Hispanic students' prospects for becoming college ready generated my understanding of the quantitative rates of college readiness among Hispanics high school graduates in the state of Texas. The goal was to understand how the Hispanic students of this single school district became college ready, given that the district's educators knew these students were likely to become members of the state's largest dropout statistic.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were not identified in this research. For the analysis phase, the participants were assigned a code number, which represented their pseudonyms in the final report document. Interviews were held in private small offices or school classrooms for privacy. The names of the participants, school district, and IHEs did not appear in this study. Identifying characteristics were masked with pseudonyms or excluded from reported data. Following the publication of the study and according to the guidelines of the University of Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB), all recordings and transcripts were to be destroyed. The approval letter from the IRB appears in Appendix A.

Confidentiality of Data Samples

The settings for the interviews were confidential and based on environments in which the participants were safe to share their knowledge without distraction. Interview times and dates were determined according to the participants' schedules based on their availability as convenient for them. Interview data were collected via face-to-face interviews with school district stakeholders. Interviews were audio recorded for later transcription and analysis. All research data were stored in a firewall and password protected computer device. Paper research data were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's private office. Documents linking specific participant information to chosen pseudonyms were securely stored in a separate file and only reviewed by me. The data were kept according to University of Texas IRB standards. The data and samples that contain participant identifiers or unmasked participant data were kept for analysis

purposes only. At the conclusion of the study and defense of the dissertation, the data were to be destroyed. Electronic and paper data files were to be destroyed according to the timeline established by the University of Texas IRB guidelines for the destruction of the data after the final report of the study was published.

All participant identifiers and responses were protected with the strictest level of confidentiality. Pseudonyms were immediately applied at the time of consent to replace personal identifiers. For confidentiality of identity, participant names were coded. Codes such as Participant 1, High School A, or IHE-A were utilized. No information linking the identities of the school district or the IHE to the actual case study participants were included in the reported data. In addition, I did not offer any compensation to the participants.

Data Procedures

The collected data from participants' interviews were entered and transcribed using NVivo 12 software. The information entered into the NVivo 12 software was inspected for accuracy by comparing it to the audio recordings. The data management and analysis procedures for this study were performed according to the following sequential steps:

1. Record the interview
2. Upload the audio data to NVivo 12
3. Transcribe the interview

4. Listen to recorded interview audio for comparison while reading the transcription
5. Make corrections to the transcription
6. Update the transcription in NVivo 12
7. Prepare to code the data by creating nodes or categories within the data file in the software that correspond to each research question,
8. Manually read and code with contextual content to the nodes that emerged
9. Create high frequency word queries to find the most frequently used words
10. Add codes based on the high frequency word queries and determine under which nodes they belong
11. Use the codes to create groups of similar content in NVivo 12
12. Create multiple subcategory nodes to refine the codes within the nodes
13. Group together similar codes under the appropriate nodes to create significant themes that represent and answer the research questions.

Preparation to answer the research questions required data analysis that began with establishing the protocol for inclusion into this case study, identification of all potential qualifying cases that meet the case study criteria, screening off the potential candidate cases, followed by the collection of data (Yin, 2018 p. 81). The transcripts of the interview data provided by the key informants representing the school district and IHEs were coded for analysis by tracking often used words and phrases. Phrases and sentences from the interviews were analyzed line by line and begin with open coding.

Next, I determined the emerging themes by comparing and contrasting patterns of codes between participants. Each individual's responses were analyzed for the prevalent emerging themes.

Next, the comparative analysis was conducted by combining all common codes and categories to determine meaningful patterns that were entered into a secondary matrix for comparing and contrasting the codes. This activity led to identifying the patterns of codes that answered the research questions. Furthermore, arrays, displays, tables, tabulations, memos, or diagrams enhanced the comparative analysis of the triangulated data. This cycle was repeated multiple times to determine all potential themes and subthemes (Yin, 2018). Themes evolved from the arrays of patterns that led to further coding of categories from the collective of quotes as well as artifacts.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine organizational structures used to produce Hispanic students who are ready for college. Furthermore, understanding how institutional collaboration between this district and its public higher education partner produced college-ready Hispanic students was sought. The data for this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews that were recorded and then transcribed. I focused on understanding the participants' knowledge and perceptions of the systems and structures that contributed to graduating such high numbers of Hispanic students who were ready for college. The four research questions that drove this study were:

1. What organizational structures exist at this school district in Texas that is graduating substantial numbers of Hispanic students who are college ready?
2. How are the organizational structures aligned with current state policies and executed to benefit Hispanic high school students' development of college readiness?
3. What formal and informal institutional collaboration strategies are being implemented between the targeted public high school and IHEs?
4. What contextual characteristics of the targeted public high school and the partnering IHEs may have contributed to the successful high school graduation and eventual enrollment in IHEs?

Data Collection

The data collection for this case study began after receiving approval from the university's IRB. Fieldwork for this case study was conducted at a school district located in the Rio Grand Valley, approximately 225 miles running along South Texas near the border with Mexico. The Rio Grand Valley school district served 11 U.S. cities and contained 14 schools ranging from pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) through Grade 12 with approximately 10,000 students attending classes. Additionally, 96% of this district's students were Hispanic, and 77% were economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2018a). This district contained one high school (High School A) that, for each of the past 5 years, earned a distinction in Index Four, Post-Secondary Readiness, and exceeded the state standards in each Indices I through IV. Additionally, High School A was not an Early College High School; but was a comprehensive high school, populated by approximately 1,700 students.

Before beginning participants' face-to-face interviews, I contacted the district superintendent via email with the IRB approval to obtain permission to conduct the research. The superintendent referred me to the executive director and selected the six participants, executive director, principal, higher education coordinator, college career coordinator, dual credit math teacher and ducal credit science teacher. The superintendent contacted the high school principal to ensure my ability to use the school facility for the interviews.

Face-to-face interviews with six participants at High School A were completed to understand the systems and structures in place that produced a high Hispanic college

readiness rate. I reiterated the purpose of the study and answered questions before beginning of each interview. Participants were individually interviewed in a private conference room at the high school. Audio recordings of participants' interviews were made with an iPhone recorder software application. I created hand-written notes during interview sessions and wrote any of the follow up questions that I asked of the participants as clarification questions during the interviews. The interviews' length was a minimum of 60 minutes.

Description of the Six Participants

The six participants of this case study were all employees of the case study public school district. All participants held general education licenses issued by the TEA. One participant worked in the central office (17%), one participant represented the high school campus' leadership (17%), two participants were higher education coordinators and advisors (33%), and two participants were dual credit and AP teachers (33%). Table 3 shows the demographic information for the participants.

Participant 1 (P1) was the department chair of the science department and had taught physics for 6 years. P1 held master's and doctoral degrees in physics. P2 was the campus principal for the past 3 years, had 16 years of teaching experience, and held a master's degree in educational administration. P2 stated that all of his 16 years in education occurred within high poverty, Hispanic districts.

Table 3

Participants' Characteristics

Participant	Gender	Years of Experience	Area	Education
1	Male	6	Teacher	Masters
2	Male	16	Principal	Masters
3	Male	16	Central Office	Masters
4	Male	8	Teacher	Masters
5	Female	14	Higher Ed	Masters
6	Female	16	Higher Ed	Masters

P3 was the executive director overseeing the career and college readiness program for the entire district. All 16 years of school experience had by P3 occurred in a high poverty district that served a majority population of Hispanic students. P4 was a math teacher who taught dual credit with 8 years of classroom teaching experience and held a master's degree in mathematics. P4 was a Hispanic male from this region of Texas and was the first person in his home to go to college.

P5 graduated from the high school being studied by the researcher, but also had 12 years of experience as a college professor at the local IHE. P5 was in the second year as a higher education coordinator role, which she described as being there to do the following:

> Ensure that the faculty, staff, students, parents are aware of the opportunities that are available to the students, not only in our area but throughout the state of Texas

and in the United States. So, we offer them opportunities to complete scholarships, college applications, and financial aid with FASFA.

P6 had directed the advanced academics and counseling services programs for the past 2 years. Previously, P6 was a higher education coordinator at a neighboring college for 14 years. P6 supervised the school counselors, higher education coordinators, and dual enrollment and AP programs.

Data Analysis

As part of the repetition involved in coding three phases of cyclical and repetitive data analysis occurred until redundancy in the codes was achieved. The first phase involved open coding, and during this first pass of line-by-line coding of the data, I followed the data with an open mind to develop descriptive themes and assign category titles. This phase included coding or selecting specific words and phrases from the content for titling purposes.

The second phase of coding, known as axial, allowed for exploration and development of emerging themes related to answering research questions. In this phase, I began merging, clustering, retitling, and eliminating categories. In the third phase of selective coding, the deepest level of analysis occurred. At this time, I interpreted the nodes and codes to produce meaningful thematic categories by synthesizing meanings found within the data's patterns. Theme adjustments and additions were part of coding the content because the cyclical process required comparing, merging, clustering, and eliminating categories during each repetition of the process.

As a result, the six transcribed interview files were imported into NVivo 12 software, using the three phases explained above, 11 node coding reports with 171 subcategory sections with in the report emerged. Table 4 provides the word frequencies for the key words that led to identifying the most frequent terms.

Table 4

Most Frequently Used Words

Word	*n*	Weighted %
School	76	37.44
Dual	19	9.36
Enrollment	19	9.36
Academic	17	8.37
Education	15	7.39
Culture	14	6.90
Collaboration	11	5.42
Aid	8	3.94
CCMR	8	3.94
Financial	8	3.94
Bill	2	0.99
House	2	0.99
Encourage	1	0.49
Family	1	0.49

Furthermore, the following phrases were high frequency phrases of participants responding to interview questions: High academic standards (100%), Teacher support (100%) Encouragement and prodding (100%) School Culture (100%) Mindset of adults

(100%) College Center staffing (100%) and Counselors (67%) Dual Enrollment (100%) Hiring Practices of Higher Ed background (83%), Department Meetings (83%).

With the most frequent words and key terms developed, I sought to identify the themes and drew meaning through the interpretation and reflection of the data. For instance, the frequency query's 15 individual words yielded the term *family culture* from the two high frequency words of family and culture. Thus, the most frequent terms found in the data through the NVivo 12 software's word frequency query function were the following: *family culture, education of families and parents, dual enrollment, financial aid, motivational strategies, prodding and encouragement, academic rigor, school culture, academic standards, collaboration of universities and schools, HB5,* and *CCMR* (i.e., College, Career, & Military Readiness).

With the high frequency key terms identified, I coded text contextually to review the following patterns:

1. Overall experience in education
2. Experience with Hispanic students
3. Higher Ed. Partners
4. About HS-A students going to and attending college
5. Systems and structures to ensure students attend college
6. College-ready programs for Hispanic students
7. District and HS-A information
8. State and Federal Regulations (i.e., HB5 and CCMR)
9. Anything Else

Emergent Themes

The thematic data's patterns evolved into more highly refined groupings in order to establish significant emergent themes that appropriately described the data contained. These significant emergent themes were derived from axial coding that included using field notes to identify the occurrence of data points more than once in the qualitative data and from the direct interpretation of the data in order to develop appropriate categories. The significant emergent themes were the following: (a) college ready school culture, (b) college going experiences of the Hispanic family, (c) navigating legislative CCMR requirements, (d) educator mindsets support the school's college going culture, (e) higher education partners are critical to developing students' college readiness. Table 5 depicts the overarching themes; each theme is summarized with associated sub themes.

College Ready School Culture

As interviews were conducted, a *College Ready School Culture* quickly emerged as an overarching theme. All six participants discussed the systems and structures that contribute to "the success of so many students becoming college ready" as stated by P2:

> "From the top, from our superintendent, our executive directors, and it just filters all the way down into the classroom. I see the teachers here and just the support they have from specialists in each content areas. There's consistent professional development, collaboration and that, I really think, has a big impact."

Table 5

Themes and Subthemes with Percentages of Participants who Indicated Theme

Overarching Theme	Associated Subthemes	%
College Ready School Culture	Prodding and Encouragement	100
	Motivational Strategies	100
	Academic Rigor	100
	School Culture	100
College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family	Family Culture	100
	Education of Families and Parents	83
	Scholarships and Financial AID	83
Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements	CCMR	83
	HB5	83
	College Center Staffing	67
	Counselors	67
	Staff Tracking Students	83
Educator Mindsets	Academic Standards	100
	Teacher Support	83
	Mindset of Adults	83
	Motivational Strategies	100
Higher Education Partners are Critical in Developing Students who are College Ready	Alignment of Resources Toward College Standards	100
	Financial Aid	100
	Dual Enrollment	100
	Hiring Practices: Teachers with Higher Education Backgrounds	83

P1 said the "one thing" that contributes to Hispanic students being successful is "the culture." P1 believed that Hispanic students were successful at attaining college readiness because:

> What we do the best here is just our culture, the people that are here, and consistently hiring the right type of people to fill out positions with the right

mindset. They're high-quality people, because I know that we definitely give all of our students tons of opportunities for advanced classes. Our dual enrollment program's very strong. Our AP programs are very strong. We have a really good college center and college advisory center.

P1 discussed having:

The right staff in place that are going to do their part. And it takes a village to raise a child, right? The same way in education, you have the right mix of counselors that care. You have the right mix of teachers that are constantly wanting the best in their students, going out of their way to provide opportunities outside of class to help students learn the material. Many teachers volunteer their time after school to have tutoring, two, three times a week, for example, outside the regular school hours.

P2 stated that the district prepares students to be college ready in elementary and middle school. P2 said, “They don’t just get here magically ready for college.” P2 described the strong foundation set by the educators having high expectations of all students, even in the lower elementary grades. P1 pointed out the following:

The college center that we have here is very impressive. They’re very good at making sure students are enrolled in their Remind account, for example, where the college center will frequently send them notifications about different scholarship opportunities that are available and informing them to stop by the college center for more information, and literally sitting down with students to bounce ideas off of them when they have questions about the different essays that

they're writing. So, yes, the college center is pretty instrumental to making sure that we stay on top of the student, because you know how it is as an educator when you're a teacher or a counselor or an administrator, there's so many responsibilities.

P2 identified that the high school had high number of academic counselors with 5 for 1,700 students. The high school also had additional higher education counselors and an ESL counselor as structures that contribute to students being college ready. In addition, the school applied a master schedule with five to six periods of an accelerated block having some classes as 45 minutes and others occurring in 90-minute blocks.

P2 stated the master schedule enabled school leaders to adjust classes for students who needed more academic support and to support those students able to accelerate course production as a means for supporting the school's high college ready rates. P3 also spoke specifically on their creative master schedule (as P2 did), they use the 90-minute classes for students who are in the bottom 20% and 45 minute for those on track. P3 specified, "We identify students in eighth grade and have to hand schedule them so they can be TSI ready by Junior year."

When asked what organizational structures contribute to such a high rate of Hispanics ready for college, P3 had several statements from high expectations to creating a college center at the high school to their master schedule. P3 stated, "It's been a tradition of just high expectations here. Our teachers have a huge input into curriculum decisions as far as department chairs, but the expectation is all kids will go to college."

P3 also stated that 4 years ago, the district hired two higher education positions, the Director of Higher Education and a Higher Education Coordinator, as permanent positions in the high school. In addition, the high school opened a college center attached to the library. P3 stated, "they are completely dedicated to helping kids maneuver the college application process, FASFA, scholarships, that is what they are charged with." In addition, as a district administrator, he had four high school teachers trained by Princeton Review. P3 stated, "The wealthy kids that can pay for it can pay whatever, $1,000 for Princeton Review, so we paid for four teachers so that we could offer the same quality tutorials for our kids, [be]cause our kids can't afford those high dollar options."

P4 described that the innate culture of the high school has set the expectation for everyone to be college ready. Structures he described were the College Center that was attached to their library where two higher education academic counselors worked full time to council and prepare students, assist with financial aid and scholarships. In addition, he has math department meetings with professors from their college partner and high school math teachers to collaborate on lessons. P1 stated, "It was through these meetings where all high school teachers didn't focus on STAAR exam, but all students passing the TSI math exams. Getting students TSI ready. Our goal is all juniors through Algebra II pass the math portion of TSI."

One other system described by P5 involved requiring all juniors taking English III to complete three essays for college applications. P5 said this requirement was "written into our curriculum for English III. This way, by July 1st, all incoming seniors have completed their application on Apply Texas and are ready to go."

College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family

Six of the six participants stated Hispanic students had two major challenges for attending college, the students' parents or family culture and the family's finances. P6 stated that affording college was a struggle for families, so her role was to work with all the layers of support to find the scholarships, the financial aid. P6 stated that families often times wanted their kids to stay close to or at home, which caused the need for educators to "work with parents to understand the opportunities their kids have."

When asking about obstacles students faced, P2 replied:

> Parents fear, their fear of the unknown and to let their kids move away and pursue their education. I think they get intimidated to leave home. It's educating the families and parents on what it is and what the opportunities are that their son or daughter.

P1, P3 and P4 stated the biggest obstacle to achieving a college degree was the Hispanic family culture. P3 explained, "They have a strong family culture and they don't want anyone to leave. We have to meet with parents and really work with them to help them understand the opportunities their kids have." P3 also spoke about a student who was offered a "very elite" summer program at MIT. If he attended, he basically earned acceptance into the Ivy League school. However, the student didn't want to go, he felt guilty leaving his family. P3 said, "He kept saying he has 'to stay and work. I won't have any money to help if I'm gone for the summer.'" P4 described a student who had a full scholarship to the University of Chicago, but the student's parents "just refused" to allow this student to attend school in Illinois. P4 said the student "went even as far as asking the

superintendent of schools to meet with the student's parents to explain what a great opportunity this was, and they still refused."

When asked about obstacles, P1 said, "The greatest obstacle that I've seen with students leaving is of course the parent consent. The culture itself: It's where are you going? Why are you going? There's no need; you have to stay here. So, I had a student, for example, get into chemical engineering at Texas A&M, one of the hardest seats to get. The mom said, "no." And so he was only going to have to pay about $2,000 a year, after we got him room and board scholarships, everything. We just kept helping, trying to find him different monies everywhere; $2000 a year, and [his] mom said, "no." P6 also emphasized that the family and Hispanic culture tended to prevent most Hispanic students from going away to college.

Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements

The state of Texas has gone through a few iterations of defining the nature of "college ready." HB5 was the first comprehensive bill that brought together college read and workforce ready. Last year, the Texas Education Commissioner further defined successful post secondary readiness as, "College, Career, Military Readiness" or CCMR. As previously stated, the CCMR represents a calculated score affecting all three domains in the Texas A-F Accountability System. When asked about HB5, and the new CCMR requirements, P3 replied, "That is the next mountain we have to conquer." P3 shared that the new career and technology education (CTE) certificates were a challenge, because the high school did not offer those courses. "Making sure that students are taking a CTE coherent sequence and matching them up with some type of a certificate. We do not have

it completely figured out yet completely. We are still working on that." Finally, although P4 was aware of HB5, P4 could not specifically identify the state policy.

P2 identified how their counselors were well versed with HB5 and the new CCMR standards in the following:

> They have already tracked the kids in their alpha, and they go through every indicator that we can measure here because we don't need all of them. They identify who's already met it, who's currently on track to meet it and who hasn't met it. So, they call those kids in, whether one needs one TSI portion, they get them, talk to them and try to get them to sign up to take the portion they need.

Educator Mindsets Support the School's College Going Culture

Dweck (2007) first coined the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset in order to describe the underlying beliefs people have about learning and intelligence. Simply stated, when one believes that they can get smarter they understand that effort makes them stronger. Six out of six participants stated that growth mindsets of the educators of the district researched contributed the most to Hispanic students being college ready. P2 and P3 stated that the "mind-set" of adults believe that "*all* kids" can be ready for college beginning with the superintendent. "I think it's a mindset, I think it's just a belief. I think it's a belief and it starts with the superintendent on down", stated P2.

P5 and P6 spoke about the "mindset" of the adults at High School A. P5 stated, "We believe *all* [italics to show emphasis by P5] kids will go to college. We don't settle for 60%, or 80% we settle for 100% going to college and nothing less. That mindset is key to the success her. The adults believe, so kids believe." When asked about the

success of Hispanic students attending college, P4 agreed with P1 about the critical importance of expectations and the adult mindset. P4 explained:

> We have a strong array of teachers; I think the district has done a very good job of instilling a college ready *mindset*. What we do here shapes our world with (our superintendent) being our leader for this district and having the model for a few years now, our high school is going to produce college ready graduates. Here at District A, it feels more like the students know that the expectation that you are going to go to college. We don't ask them, "Do you want to go to college?" We tell them, "You are going to go college." [It] makes a world of difference, especially for Hispanic students who are first generation students who don't have parents at home that went to college.

When asked what leads to a high number of students graduating ready for college, P3 stated "mindset of adults" and elucidated:

> I think the district has done a very good job of instilling a college ready mindset. Just from our model of what we do shapes our world with [the superintendent] being our leader for this district and having the model for a few years now, that we are going to produce college ready graduates, no matter what. We don't ask, "do you want to go to college, we say you *are* [italics for emphasis provided by the speaker] going to college."

P3 described the collaboration between their higher ed partner as a mindset of "the way we do things."

Higher Education Partners are Critical to Developing Students' College Readiness

When asked about higher education partners, all six participants identified the same four college and university partners. The two 2-year colleges were IHE-A and IHE-B. The two 4-year colleges were IHE-C and IHE-D. Specifically, P5 and P6, the higher education staff located on the high school campus, stated the success of High School A involved how much of what courses used to be offered only at the participating college are now integrated into the *system* of the high school. For instance, P5's and P6's positions would normally be located at the IHEs. Now, they are housed at High School A, and both higher education coordinators are employees of the district. P5 noted:

> We bring the higher ed[ucation], the college, to the kids. That is why we created the College Center on campus as an extension of the library. They come here, meet with me, and we work through financial aid, scholarships. I bring outside university reps here to meet with kids.

P2 described their higher education partners as IHE-A, IHE-B, IHE-C, and IHE-D and noted the "majority of teachers are hired with credentials to teach dual enrollment courses. P2 stated, "We don't adjunct anyone here, all of ours are in-house. I have three college algebra teachers, two college pre-calculus teachers, calculus, anatomy and physics and government all dual enrollment as well as literature and two composition teachers." P2 added, "The collaboration between our institutions is beyond collaboration, it IS our system of how we educate our students."

P1, P2, P4, P5 and P6 stated that they have formal set meetings with all college partners. P6 stated, "Our formal collaboration is meeting with them twice a week to help

in the College Center with our kids." They described as open communication and collaboration that is built into their schedules. P6 also went into depth on the stability of the district with the superintendent being at the helm for 12 years. "the fact that (superintendent) has been is this role as long 12 years makes a difference. Our board is stable, and it has been this way for over a decade."

P1 referred to IHE-A, IHE-C, and IHE-D as the main higher education partners. P1 and P4 noted that the high school educators meet with the higher education faculty every week to discuss upcoming lessons, upcoming exams, and struggling students. P1 also stated that their higher education partners were involved in the hiring process of all dual credit teachers at the high school.

Findings for Research Questions

Once the interview analysis was completed, and emerging themes identified, the related to the four research questions presented at the beginning of this chapter.

Research Question 1 Findings: Organizational Structures that Support Hispanic Students' College Readiness

Three structures, identified by all six participants, exist at this high school that specifically contribute to the college going culture in producing high rates of Hispanic students ready for college. The first is, two district positions located at the high school whose sole purpose is to track students and ensure they have applied for college, completed financial aid and submitted at least three applications to different universities. This position has traditionally been located at the college, as a "college advisor". All six participants mentioned these two positions (this is in addition to their academic

counselors) as critical. P2 stated, “They track all students, meet with them to follow up on their applications, their essays and their financial aid. I’m not sure if other high schools have these positions that are located and funded by the high school.”

Secondly, a College Center was created as an additional wing to the high school library.” It has computers, laptops, couches and tables that make it feel like a college campus. We bring college recruiters here on a weekly basis so students don’t have to go to them and more importantly, it has a college feel to it. The lounge chairs and sofas make it a comfortable space to work.” stated by both P5 and P6. This was a large investment from the district to add an additional wing to the high school library for the sole purpose of providing a space to prepare students for college.

Thirdly, the district made curriculum changes that specifically targeted students in Grades 11 and 12 to ensure the students completed applications for college admission. Also, the English curricula for Grades 11 and 12 were modified. Three college essays had to be completed by the end of Grade 11. Three college applications had to be submitted through the Apply Texas portal to universities by the end of August early in Grade 12. I asked P5, “What if a student wants the military or a different path?” P5 responded:

> Doesn’t matter; all students are expected to have three essays completed for college applications by end of junior year and Apply Texas completed by August of senior year. Even if they are going to the military, [students] must complete this in order to pass English III and English IV.

Most of the participants stated that many students just assume colleges will not accept them. Without the academic requirements to apply to college, students would not do so.

The school district did not give the students the "option to apply" by making college applications an expectation for all students in Grades 11 and 12.

Research Question 2 Findings: Organizational Structures' Alignment with Current State Policies for Developing College Readiness in Hispanic High School Students

In 2013, HB5 passed in the 83rd Legislature and encouraged the partnering of school districts with higher education in order to offer more rigorous course work at the high school aligning to a career pathway (TEA, 2017). In 2017, HB1638 passed in the 85th Legislature and codified collaboration between the THECB and TEA in determining one set of dual credit goals for both organizations. Additionally, The Texas A-F Accountability system contains a College, Career & Military Readiness (CCMR) score that is calculated in all three domains. This involves the tracking all students in the three categories stated in the title, college (SAT/ACT, TSI, AP/Dual Credit, Associates Degree), career (CTE courses where students earn industry based certifications) and military (acceptance in one of the four branches of our armed forces) readiness. The structures identified in Research Question 1 included the higher education coordinators, the College Center, and Grades 11 and 12 curricula requirements. These structures served as the vehicle used by High School A to meet legislative requirements as well as earn a high CCMR score.

High School A not only produced successful Hispanic students but also attained postsecondary readiness distinctions from the TEA. High School A has earned a postsecondary TEA distinction for 5 consecutive years (TEA, 2018a). Additionally, High School A exceeded the state target score for postsecondary readiness (formerly Index 4)

each year since 2013 (TAPR, 2013) and exceeded the state CCMR by 2% at 56%. The data showed that the structures and systems in place at High School A aligned with state policies and enabled Hispanic students to graduate college ready.

Research Question 3 Findings: Formal and Informal Institutional Collaboration Strategies Found Between the School District and its IHE Partners

Participants housed at High School A were P1, P2, P4, P5 and P6. All five described both formal and informal collaboration between the high school and college partners. They discussed the monthly meetings between the district-level executive director and colleges' deans, presence of the Higher Education Coordinators within High School A, the semi-monthly meetings between the colleges' recruiters and the High School A advisors, and the daily informal communications occurring between high school and IHE personnel. Formal collaboration via weekly meetings involved dual credit teachers and college professors lead to informal collaboration with daily emails and telephone calls related to lesson development and teaching strategies.

Research Question 4 Findings: The Case Study High School's and the Partnering IHEs' Contextual Characteristics Promoting High School Graduation and IHE Enrollment

For the purpose of this study, contextual characteristics were defined as "the ecology/environment that are related to the effectiveness" to collaboration. Research Question 4 was to identify the underlying expectations of the district, the culture and climate that isn't easily measured in a TAPR report. All six participants stated that mindsets of educators contributed the most in producing the success of Hispanic students

ready for college. The district leadership set in motion, at least 10 years ago, the expectation that all students would attend college. Based on the responses from the six participants, district leaders developed and cultivated this mindset in teachers of all grades and between everyone in the central office. All participants spoke, from their perspectives in their different roles, about how new staff either adopts High School A's philosophy or leaves employment in this district.

Summary

In Chapter Four, the findings described how the six participants perceived and understood what structures and collaboration in High School A results in such a high success of Hispanic students being college ready. The research design was purposefully aligned with strategies designed to investigate the perspectives and experiences of the participants interviewed. In the narratives presented, the frequencies of the participants' data within the identified themes appeared. The data coding cycles and analysis used to identify themes were explained. The evolving themes and their supporting foundations were displayed in Table 5. The lived experiences of the participants at High School A led the narrative in supporting the creation of the five overarching themes. From the five themes, the four research questions were answered.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this case study was to examine one academically high performing district in Texas to determine organizational structures used to produce Hispanic students who are ready for college. Furthermore, I explored how institutional collaboration between this school district and its public higher education partners produced college-ready Hispanic students. I examined the district's organizational structures and how collaboration between its high school and area public IHEs produced college-ready Hispanic students. To fulfill this purpose, the case study was applied to one school district in Texas that produced the highest numbers of college ready Hispanic high school graduates.

Summary of the Study

As stated in Chapter One, Hispanic students are the fastest growing student population that make up the highest percent of high school dropouts, 61.9% (TEA, 2018d). The tectonic education issues in Texas were related to the growing Hispanic population, them exhibiting high percent of dropouts accompanied by the low college readiness rate (Murdock, 2017; TEA, 2017; THECB, 2015; United States Census Bureau, 2011b, 2017). Hispanic students were on pace to become the largest English Language Learner group, the largest economically disadvantaged group, and the majority stakeholder group in Texas schools by 2040. As Carlson and McChesney (2015) stated college degree attainment kept pace with inflation but did not enable an increase in standard of living, "a Bachelor's Degree is the minimum degree attainment level needed to maintain standard of living and not lose buying power" (p. 44). The consequences of a

broken pipeline to college for Hispanic students can lead to severe economic and social implications for Texas' economy. If the Hispanic population remains undereducated and working in low wage jobs, the financial impact would be deleterious for Texas. The need for Hispanic students entering and succeeding in college is vital to the state's economy. Previous researchers posited that collaboration between school districts and higher education increase the potential of students ready for college; however, there was need for research to describe specifically, the collaboration between school districts and IHEs as affecting college readiness.

Fieldwork for this case study was conducted at a school district located in the Rio Grand Valley that served 11 U.S. cities and contained 14 schools ranging from pre-K through Grade 12 and approximately 10,000 students. Additionally, 96% of this district's students were Hispanic, and 77% were economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2018d). This district contained one high school (High School A) that, for each of the past 5 years, earned a distinction in Index Four, Post-Secondary Readiness, and exceeded the state standards in each Indices I through IV.

As stated in Chapter 4, the six participants of this case study were all employees of the case study public school district. All participants held general education licenses issued by the TEA. One participant worked in the central office, one participant represented the high school campus' leadership, two participants were higher education coordinators and advisors, and two participants were dual credit and AP teachers. As the interviews and data collection ensued, the results indicated that the district's sustained

success with graduating college ready Hispanic students required more than collaboration with higher education partners.

Thematic Findings

The comprehensive collaboration necessary for the college and career readiness outcomes exhibited by the district's high school appeared in the overarching themes that emerged from the data. The five overarching themes listed below are discussed in the following subsections:

- College Ready School Culture
- College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family
- Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements
- Educator Mindsets
- Higher Education Partners are Critical to Developing Students' College Readiness

College Ready School Culture

The first overarching theme, College Ready School Culture, appeared to be a result of high expectations, a belief that all students can learn at high levels and having the "right people in the right places." The school board trustees and superintendent shared the belief or vision that all students from this district must go to college. The superintendent had a long tenure in the role of 13 years and contributed greatly to this core belief resonating in principals and teachers from pre-K to Grade 12. All six participants discussed the systems and structures that contribute to "the success of so many students being college ready" as the expectation from their top leader, the

superintendent, setting the tone of a college going culture. This college ready culture has filtered from the top all the way to the classroom. The district invests in professional development in order for to support all educators to have classrooms that produce college ready students.

Participants further described the culture of the people employed in the district and the people they recruit to work in the district. "The people keep this culture going" by identifying potential hires that believe in the college opportunities for all students. Participants described how critical it was to have the right staff in place, having people who care about kids. Participants gave several examples of teachers going out of their way to provide opportunities outside of class to help students' excel. Many volunteer their time after school to have tutoring, two to three times a week, with no expectation of being compensated.

College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family

The second overarching theme, College Going Experiences of the Hispanic Family, proved many times to be an additional obstacle for Hispanic students to overcome. Each participant interviewed revealed the biggest obstacles for their students involved persuading students' families to accept the idea of their kids going away to school. All participants described specific instances of meeting with parents to explain why attending a Tier I university 4 hours away from home was an excellent prospect for ensuring their children had more financial and career opportunities. All participants also shared instances when parents absolutely refused to allow their children to leave the area for college and university opportunities, even when the superintendent met with them.

Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements

The third overarching theme was Navigating Legislative CCMR Requirements. As stated in the literature review of Chapter Two, in 2013 the 83rd Texas Legislature passed HB5 which stipulates public schools to accurately reflect a college and career readiness culture by expanding curriculum and streamlining career pathways aimed at preparing students to be college/career ready (TEA, 2018c). The 85th Texas Legislature in 2017 passed HB1638 and required the THECB and TEA to collaboratively develop statewide goals for dual credit programs. These new requirements involve tracking not only every high school student's pathway choice as required by HB5 but also every high school graduate's post high school actions, such as military enlistment, community college or university enrollment, CTE certification, and associate's degree attainment. The TEA's education commissioner added the requirement for school districts to track all high school students' ACT or SAT scores, dual credit course grades, and AP test scores as part of the A to F accountability system. As a result, every high school in the state of Texas now has a CCMR score based on all students' outcomes that weighs into all three domains of the current A to F accountability system (TEA, 2018a, 2018b). Interestingly, the case study school district already had these tracking mechanisms in place prior to the new state-initiated mandates.

Among the case study participants, 83% stated that navigating the new requirements was a challenge despite the additional counselors and two higher education coordinators located at High School A. When discussing collaboration between IHEs and the school district around these new legislative requirements, the participants indicated

although HB1683 aimed at promoting collaboration between the IHEs and school districts, the school districts bore the responsibility to track students and provide all the data to the state.

Educator Mindsets Support the School's College Going Culture

The fourth, and most reoccurring overarching theme, was Educator Mindsets Support the School's College Going Culture. It can be stated that the six participants interviewed have what Dr. Carol Dweck refers to as a *growth mindset* (Dweck, 2007) and describe their colleagues as adopting this mindset as well. When participants were asked, "What's the one thing that contributes the most to high college readiness rates for Hispanic students", all stated *mindset*. As one enters High School A, you're greeted at the door, college posters in the hallways, students in a corner working on a project for a dual credit class, the electronic marque in side the cafeteria reveal what students have been accepted to colleges. Two participants stated that this mindset does not begin at the high school and is a mindset that affects students as early as entering preschool and kindergarten. The growth mindset set the tone and expectation of all who interacted with the students of this school district, and from the data collected by the participants, this mindset was mandatory and nonnegotiable. The mindsets of the adults in this district drove and sustained its college going culture.

Higher Education Partners are Critical to Developing Students' College Readiness

The fifth overarching theme was Higher Education Partners are Critical to Developing Students' College Readiness. It was apparent that the collaboration between this public school district and their higher education partners has been in place for several

years. 100% of participants described both formal and informal meetings between both the higher ed. partner and the school district. College presidents of all higher education partners meet with the superintendent yearly to ensure that the partnership is over all working for both entities. Additionally, at the district level, the executive directors and curriculum coordinators meet quarterly with their college partners to ensure that the expectations of both entities are clear. It is these meetings where adjustments to curriculum, scheduling and inter-local agreements are reviewed and discussed. Dual credit teachers located at High School A emailed, called, and texted their counterparts at the partnering college on a daily basis. The partnership also involved college staff joining the interview and hiring process with the campus principal for dual credit teachers. The higher education coordinators worked with several colleges, not just those in the area, about financial aid and resources for students matriculating in universities. All participants described this partnership as "vital" to the success of Hispanic students being ready for college.

Summary of Research Questions' Findings

College Readiness Structures

The first research question was about the structures in place at this district that contributed to so many Hispanic students being college ready. This district had many structures, but for the purposes of this study, three structures were named by all six participants and are the focus of the college readiness structures. The first involved two district positions located at High School A for the sole purpose of tracking students and ensuring they applied for college, completed financial aid, and submitted at least three

applications to different universities. All six participants mentioned these two positions that operate on campus in addition to traditional high school academic counselors as critical to their CCMR success. The higher education coordinators, who had significant experience at the local community colleges, were identified as additional staff who were relentless about meeting with individual students and following up on their checklists for Apply Texas, their essays, and their financial aid applications and needs. I had not heard of high schools funding and housing positions that would traditionally be located at the college.

Secondly, a College Center was created as an additional wing to the high school library. The College Center was designed with couches, computers, laptops, and group study areas to reflect the environment of a college library. On a weekly basis, college recruiters report to the College Center to engage students in discussions about their HIEs. This is one method for the district to bring the IHEs to the students. The College Center was a large investment from the district, which added an additional wing to the high school library for the sole purpose of providing a space to prepare students for college.

Thirdly, the district made curriculum changes that specifically targeted students in Grades 11 and 12 to ensure they were ready for college enrollment. The English curricula in Grades 11 and 12 were modified. In Grade 11 English, students wrote three college essays. Grade 12 English students completed and submitted three applications to universities through the Apply Texas application portal.

About students who want to enlist in the military or take a different path, the culture of the district was best stated by P5:

> It doesn't matter. All students are expected to have three essays completed for college applications by end of junior year and Apply Texas completed by August of senior year. Even if they are going to the military, [students] must complete [these assignments] in order to pass English III and English IV.

Most of the participants stated that many students just assumed they would not be accepted into an IHE. If it were not for the curricula requirements, student would attempt to gain admission to an IHE. This school district gave all Grade 11 and 12 students only one option: Apply to college as an academic expectation.

Organizational Structures that Align with State Policies

The second research question referred to organizational structures that aligned with current state policies and executed to benefit Hispanic students' development of college readiness. High School A had three structures in place. First, there were two Higher Education Coordinators. Second, the College Center was located in the school's library. Third, curriculum requirements served as a vehicle to fulfill CCMR requirements, such as using English courses for ensuring students would write essays for college applications.

These three structures ensured all students took the SAT/ACT, scored a 3 or more on an AP exam, earned credit in a dual credit class, followed a coherent CTE sequence to earn certifications, or enlisted in the armed services. The high school's college going culture subsequently provided context for success that other school districts might not have for meeting the new legislative requirements that came into effect with HB1683. The success evidence appears in the CCMR score of this district that was 2% higher than

the state's CCMR in the first year of the TEA's A to F accountability system. Texas' statewide CCMR rate was 54%, and this school district CCMR rate was 56% (TEA, 2018b).

Additionally, the total state student demographics did not represent the concentration of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students served by the case study school district. The state's student population was 52.4% Hispanic while this district's Hispanic student population was 96%. The state' percentage of students of economic disadvantage was 58.7%; however, 77% of the students were economically disadvantaged in the case study school district (TEA, 2018a). Clearly, the district's CCMR rate suggested this district's organizational structures did align with state policies about developing college readiness. Moreover, the district showed that college readiness gaps can be closed among minority students in the district's predominantly Hispanic and low-income student population.

Institutional Collaboration Strategies

The third research question was identifying formal and informal institutional collaboration strategies being implemented between the school district and IHEs. I found both formal and informal collaboration occurring between the district and its IHE partners at every level from the superintendent and college president to dual credit teachers and college professors. The Executive Director for College and Career and College Deans held collaborative monthly meetings. The Higher Education Coordinators located at High School A met formally with IHE recruiters and advisors twice monthly and informally communicated with the IHE partners almost every day. Formal

collaboration of weekly meetings with dual credit teachers and college professors led to informal collaboration on lesson development and teaching strategies through emails and telephone calls. This coadunation occurred on a daily basis and is addressed in the discussion section that follows the contextual characteristics findings related to the fourth research question.

Contextual Characteristics

The fourth research question asked about the contextual characteristics of the district and partnering IHEs that also contributed to the successful graduation and enrollment of Hispanic students in IHEs. As mentioned in Chapter Four, for the purpose of this study, contextual characteristics included ecological aspects of the environment that affected the effectiveness of collaboration between independent entities. Research Question 4 led to identifying the underlying expectations of the district, the culture, the mindsets, and areas not measured in a TAPR report as vital to learning organization success. The reoccurring responses about the district's "college going culture" and the "mindsets of adults" from all participants reflected the belief system this learning organization held its educators and stakeholders accountable for following. Over 10 years ago, the district's leaders set the expectation for all students to go to college. Based on the responses from all participants, this mindset was present from pre-K teachers to central office administrators. This expectancy culture clearly sustained itself, according to data provided by the participants. All participants spoke from their different roles' perspectives about how new staff members either adopt this philosophy or leave the district.

The overarching themes presented in this study can be observed several of the structures of this school district. Years ago, the autonomous learning organizations began coordinating each of their efforts in the premise that students' college attainment benefits all stakeholders. Over time, the school district modified itself and its culture by changing the hiring requirements to require the same credentials for teachers as partnering IHEs required for faculty. The school district adjusted and aligned curriculum to ensure all students were prepared for and successful on the TSI, ACT, and SAT assessments as well as in AP and dual credit courses. Higher education advising of students occurred inside of the high school and led to the school's *college and career going culture*.

Discussion

The following discussion is designed to clarify and support the findings of this study. The purpose of this case study was to examine one highly academically performing district in Texas serving a high concentration of college ready Hispanic students. I noted how institutional collaboration for higher learning between IHEs and this school district, as suggested by the research, formed a significant factor in producing college-ready Hispanic students. In Chapter Two, the definitions of collaboration were synthesized, but all resulted in two or more entities working together in achieving the same goal and that benefits all stakeholders from each entity involved. Corrigan (2000) indicated there is a great deal of difference between cooperation, coordination, and collaboration, which the current case study findings supported.

Gajda (2004) proposed that the interaction of two or more entities operate along a four-point continuum. The findings suggested this continuum was represented in the

collaboration between the school district and the IHEs. Using this framework in relation to this case study, the school district studied operates beyond collaboration and more toward coadunation with its higher education partners over the past 10 years. Figure 4 is the adjusted graphic of how the findings apply to Gajda's model.

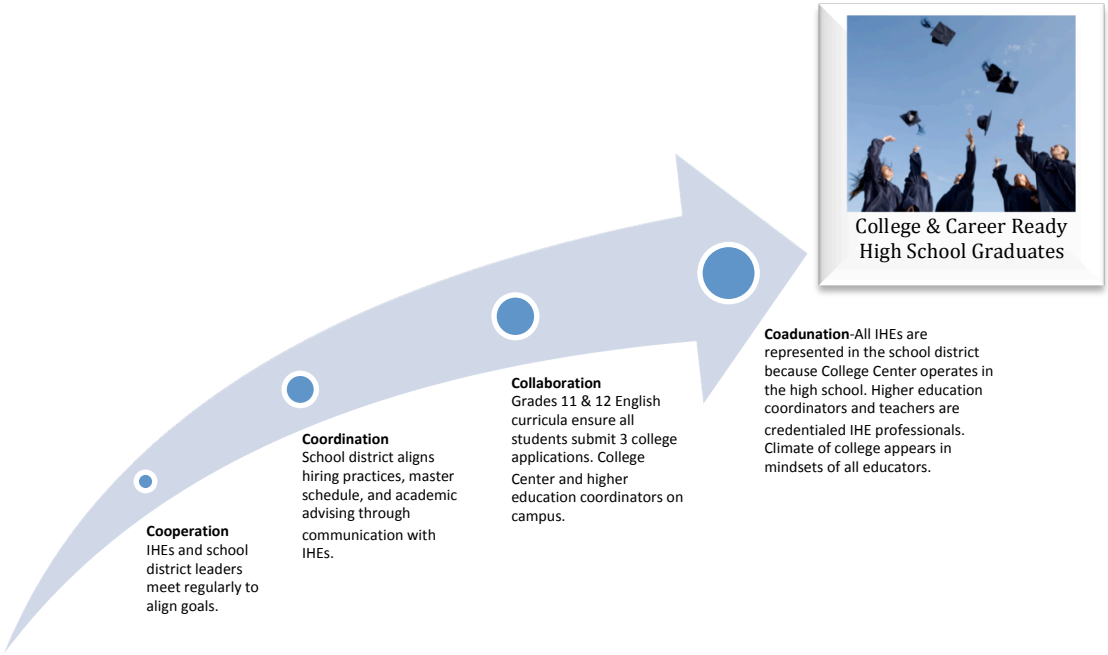


Figure 4. Model of the achievement of coadunation between the Rio Grand Valley school district and its IHE partners.

Early into the partnerships, cooperation occurred as the fully independent groups shared information and materials to support the goals of college readiness. Cooperation occurred through annual meetings with the school district's superintendent and the college and university presidents. Additionally, quarterly communication meetings happened between the college deans and the district's executive director. These meetings

resulted in opportunities for the district to reach its goals and expectation of all students to be college ready at high school graduation.

Through coordination, when the independent parties aligned their activities services to support the mutually beneficial goal of college readiness. Three major activities advanced coordination between the school district and the IHEs. First, there was alignment of hiring qualifications regarding not only dual credit teachers but also college professors. Second, the district included writing a college essay in the Grade 11 English course's curriculum. Third, the district required students in Grade 12 English to apply to a minimum of three colleges. The curriculum practices indicated the movement toward collaboration was fluid.

Collaboration began as the individual entities gave up aspects of institutional independence to realize the shared goal of college readiness. In this case study, the school district gave up traditional practices related to master schedule, hiring practices, and academic advising. The school district embraced a master schedule that would accelerate and remediate students according to their college and career paths, adopted the hiring practices of their partner IHEs, and employed two higher education coordinators who were housed at the high school to provide college counseling to all students.

The highest level of coadunation was achieved with interdependence. The case study school district brought the colleges and universities into the high school. There was no point indicating when and where the high school ended and the college began. The two levels of education had been completely merged based on the shared expectation for students. All of the interviewed educators exemplified this expectation through their

discussions of mindsets. The school district invested in the College Center and two higher education coordinators working on the high school campus to advise students on scholarships and financial aid applications and to track students' college applications to various colleges as "the way we do things" in this school district. Furthermore, the practices are supported by the alignment for dual credit requirements of HB 1683.

Students can simply go to the district's The College Center located inside of the high school to talk to the two professional higher education coordinators who assist them in preparing for and navigating aspects of enrolling in college that include the financial aid and admissions application processes. Furthermore, in the *mindsets* of all educators were thoughts of "*all* kids will go to college" and creating "college ready graduates no matter what." The participants noted the mindset was not only present among all faculty and staff in High School A, but also within the elementary schools, the feeder middle schools, the central office personnel including the superintendent, and the school board. The school board and superintendent required mindset established by the as evidenced by three of their district goals:

1. Move the learning experience beyond state and federal standards in an effort to provide college and career readiness for all students.
2. Deliver professional learning opportunities that allow staff to achieve a higher level of proficiency.
3. Increase awareness and offer instructional programs that lead to college and career readiness.

As previously stated, effective collaboration, or coadunation, does not develop in a single day or short time frame. Coadunation required trust and confidence to be built with all parties involved and took years to occur. This school district and higher education partners are at the coadunation stage of Gajda's (2004) continuum. The district brought the college, its structures, and its systems into its fold. IHEs were completely embedded and enacted at High School A. Institutional collaboration was successful between this district and their higher education partners. The district's systems and structures need to be taken to scale across the state. Several implications for practice follow from the findings.

Implications for Practice

The case study involved a school district in Texas that was high performing with high success rates among its graduates as college-ready while serving a high concentration of Hispanic students. The driving question for this case study involved how institutional collaboration affected college and career readiness among Hispanic students in this school district. The implications for practice were derived from the themes and findings developed from the perspectives of six educators who were employed by the district in different capacities that ranged from executive director to dual credit teacher. The significance of this case study, as argued in Chapter One, remains valid for the practice-based implications.

First, structures in place at this successful district resulted from its history of collaboration with four higher education partners. One structure that could be applied statewide involves reducing the staffing ratio for students to academic counselors and

adding higher education coordinators as required personnel in all high schools. This high school's academic counselor to student ratio totaled seven for its 1,700 students (or 1:243); thus, the data indicated that the state's recommendation of 1 counselor to 300 students (or 1:300) was antiquated. This district's counselors each handled a caseload of approximately 240 students. This ratio offered counselors the opportunity to provide a more personal approach to serving their students' academic needs because the ratio reduced the caseload by about 60 students. Adding higher education coordinators to all high schools' personnel staff in a manner similar to the use of assistant principals as a staple at all high schools in Texas could enable all high schools in Texas to achieve college readiness results similar to High School A's results. These positions would essentially bring the college to the high school. The higher education coordinators could enhance collaboration levels between high schools and area colleges and potentially grow the collaboration into a system of coadunation.

A second implication of practice would be a statewide curriculum for training and educating the parents of first generation college students about the implications and benefits of earning a college degree. All participants stated that the most difficult obstacle to overcome for Hispanic students attending college was their parents' perceptions about college. The following recommended curriculum for teaching parents of fifth grade students who are about to choose classes for middle school could be applied across the state in all fifth grade classrooms: (a) the specific rationales for college attendance, (b) the pros and cons of allowing children to attend universities that may not be in the city limits of the school district, (c) ways for mitigating college costs, and (d) how to make a

visit to a college, even a local college, with their children before beginning Grade 9 of high school. The goals of educating parents prior to their children entering middle school are to reduce their fears about their children moving away and to help them identify ways to support their children and experience with college going behavior during their children's experiences in the middle grades. By doing so, as children enter high school, parents' fears might be alleviated. Parents did not understand how their children leaving for a college could benefit them or their children financially or career-wise. Parent education could become tied to the Title I requirements for all elementary school parent involvement. Title I requirements for middle school parent involvement could be a documented college visit attended by parents with their children.

The third implication involves the mindsets of educators. All educators need to believe that all students can become college and career ready. Several factors contributed to the college ready culture of this district. First, the relationships between the members of the board of trustees and the district's superintendent led to the culture of college readiness that permeated in High School A. The superintendent of this district had served in the role for the last 13 years. Additionally, when reviewing past board meetings for this school district, the majority of meetings began at 6:00 pm and adjourned by 7:30 pm. For action items recommended by the superintendent, 95% of the votes were in favor of the superintendent's recommendations as unanimous (i.e., 7 to 0).

In addition to the questions I asked of participants, I spoke informally while visiting the locale of the school district with community members, including local residents and small business owners, about their perceptions of the board to

superintendent relationship. All community members that were informally questioned stated that their board has been stable for many years. One specifically said, "When one trustee decides to step down, another in the community member steps up to serve with no challenges."

This board-superintendent relationship has set the college readiness tone for all educators. As previously stated, three of the six academic goals are around college preparedness. This college ready culture began with the superintendent and board of trustees 13 years ago, and they included community stakeholders, teachers, and staff in setting the vision for the district's mission and goals. This district's culture of college readiness was set in motion long before HB5, HB1683, or the A-F Accountability Model were passed. This district could be a flagship model for successfully preparing minority students for college success through the successful relationship between the board and superintendent.

More importantly, this superintendent held all educators accountable to the goals of the district. When considering implementing the college readiness belief system across the state of Texas, the current requirements can be applied to the idea. Currently all school districts submit district improvement plans in which the district's vision, mission, and goals must be stated. Even though not all districts have the level of minority majority this district had, the obvious question becomes, "how come more school districts do not successfully produce college ready minority students?" The data here suggest the success begins with school boards selecting superintendents able to bring change and innovation to the district and supporting the superintendent in doing the job by approving the

superintendent's recommendations. Given the low matriculation of Hispanic students entering college in Texas as the lowest among all student groups, Texas school district's application of the principals in this case study could be applied across the state for significantly increasing Hispanic students deemed as college ready.

Recommendations for Further Research

The study's findings lead to recommendations for further investigation into effects of collaboration between public schools and higher education of Hispanics being ready and successful in college. Additional methodologies and expanded sample sizes are recommended for researchers investigating Hispanic students who are college ready as a function of institutional collaboration with IHEs. Both qualitative and quantitative methods should be used in following up the findings of this case study:

1. The superintendent's longevity appeared to affect the school district's CCMR scores. It was not possible to determine definitively if this results was due to the superintendents long tenure of 13 years, but the superintendent did offer stability to the school district and could have enabled the high school's CCMR efforts to be reliably higher than the state's CCMR rate. Further study regarding the effects of stable superintendent leadership over time may enable the development of a model that would benefit future superintendents seeking to generate successful college and career ready high school graduates.
2. The case study district appeared to be only minimally affected by HB5 and HB1683 due to its ongoing college and career readiness systems. Understanding how other districts with different populations of students or

located in different types of areas, such as urban or rural, effectively pursue CCMR rates of 50% or better, according to the TEA's accountability system, may support the development of a grounded theory for CCMR success.

3. This study's findings do not apply to charter schools because of the differences in how state laws affect charter schools. Nonetheless, charter schools must meet the same accountability requirements as traditional school districts. Future case study research about a charter school's partnerships with IHEs could illuminate how college readiness levels among charter school students are achieved.
4. A quantitative study of student race/ethnicity characteristics, CCMR rates, counselor to student ratios, and dropout rates between charter and traditional districts' high school graduates or between traditional districts of urban, suburban, and rural status could add breadth of understanding about factors that impact efforts to promote college readiness. For example, a quantitative study could be causal comparative and apply the grades of A to F as the dependent variable. This type of study would potentially indicate whether the current finds have transferability across the state.
5. A qualitative study could include multiple cases of different rates of CCMR for case comparisons between charter and traditional districts' high school graduates or between traditional districts of urban, suburban, and rural status.
6. A case study at an IHE that has a partnership with a local school district could add depth to the current findings and provide the postsecondary perspective

about how the collaboration affects Hispanic students entering the institutions with college readiness. For example, researchers could ask: How do postsecondary partners view the systems and structures offered by the school district and what level and types of involvement do the postsecondary partners have in aiding college readiness goals?

Conclusion

I applied the case study design in a school district producing a high volume of Hispanic graduates ready for college that was the result of institutional collaboration. I explored what collaboration and structures led to this district's success with CCMR its student population that included 96% Hispanic and 77% economically disadvantaged (TEA, 2018a). Six participants shared their experiences and perceptions of how one of the highest performing school districts in the state used collaboration with IHEs in preparing its Hispanic high school students to be ready for college. Based on my past experiences as a high school principal of both an Early College High School and a large comprehensive high school, I found the perspectives shared by the participants to resonate with current practices in the field. I identified systems and structures that could be reproduced in any high school in the state. The key behavior that repeated by the participants many times involved applying the college mindset to all students' abilities and opportunities. Evidently, the educators involved in improving student outcomes must hold strong core beliefs about Hispanic students' ability to learning at high levels and be "willing to do what it takes" for their high school students to graduate college ready. Establishing structures for institutional collaboration that were effectively implemented

over many years led to this district's success with college readiness among its Hispanic high school graduates.

Appendices

Appendix A -IRB Approval Letter

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT & COMPLIANCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 07/17/2018
PI: Ruben D Olivarez
Dept: Educational Administration
Title: College Ready Hispanic: A Result of Institutional Collaboration?

Re: IRB Exempt Determination for Protocol Number 2018-04-0063

Dear Ruben D Olivarez,

Recognition of Exempt status based on 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Qualifying Period: 07/17/2018 to 07/06/2021. Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date. A continuing review report must be submitted in three years if the research is ongoing.

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

Research that is determined to be Exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is not exempt from ensuring protection of human subjects. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the following throughout the conduct of the research study:

1. Assuring that all investigators and co-principal investigators are trained in the ethical principles, relevant federal regulations, and institutional policies governing human subject research.
2. Disclosing to the subjects that the activities involve research and that participation is voluntary during the informed consent process.
3. Providing subjects with pertinent information (e.g., risks and benefits, contact information for investigators and RSC) and ensuring that human subjects will voluntarily consent to participate in the research when appropriate (e.g., surveys, interviews).
4. Assuring the subjects will be selected equitably, so that the risks and benefits of the research are justly distributed.
5. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any information or unanticipated problems that may increase the risk to the subjects and cause the category of review to be reclassified to expedited or full board review.
6. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any complaints from subjects regarding their risks and benefits.
7. Assuring that the privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the research data will be maintained appropriately to ensure minimal risks to subjects.
8. Reporting, by submission of an amendment request, any changes in the research study that alter the level of risk to subjects.

These criteria are specified in the PI Assurance Statement that must be signed before determination of exempt status will be granted. The PI's signature acknowledges that they understand and accept these conditions. Refer to the Office of Research Support & Compliance (RSC) website www.utexas.edu/irb for specific information on training, voluntary informed consent, privacy, and how to notify the IRB of unanticipated problems.

1. Closure: Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the RSC.

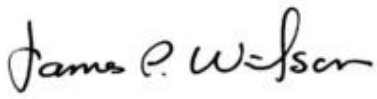
2. Unanticipated Problems: Any unanticipated problems or complaints must be reported to the IRB/RSC immediately. Further information concerning unanticipated problems can be found in the IRB Policies and Procedure Manual.

3. Continuing Review: A Continuing Review Report must be submitted if the study will continue beyond the three year qualifying period.

4. Amendments: Modifications that affect the exempt category or the criteria for exempt determination must be submitted as an amendment. Investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the IRB Program Coordinator(s) to describe any changes prior to submitting an amendment. The IRB Program Coordinator(s) can help investigators determine if a formal amendment is necessary or if the modification does not require a formal amendment process.

If you have any questions contact the RSC by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,



James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

Appendix B

District Central Office Interview Guide

What is your role?

How long have you been in this role?

Do you have a higher education partner?

Describe this partnership.

How often does central office administrators collaborate with your higher education partner?

What is your experience with Hispanic students?

Tell me about students of High school "A" going to college?

What is your perception of High School "A" attending college?

Describe what systems are in place to ensure students attend college?

Describe the college ready programs that specifically target Hispanic students.

Appendix C

Higher Education Personnel Interview Guide

What is your role?

How long have you been in this role?

What district/high schools do you partner with?

Describe this partnership.

How often does you collaborate with your district partner(s)?

What is your experience with Hispanic students?

Tell me about students of High school "A" going to college?

What is your perception of High School "A" attending college?

Describe what systems are in place to ensure students attend college?

Describe the college ready programs that specifically target Hispanic students.

Appendix D

High School Teacher Interview Guide

Tell me about your role as a teacher in High School "A"

How long have you been a teacher?

How long have you been a teacher at this high school?

Tell me about your experience as a Teacher with regard to Hispanic students

What is your experience with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest challenge with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest success with Hispanic students?

Tell me about students of High school "A" going to college?

What is your perception of High School "A" attending college?

Are systems in place to ensure students attend college?

Are there colleges/universities that partner with High School "A"?

What is your knowledge of the partnership with colleges/universities?

Have you ever met with these higher education partners?

Describe the college ready programs that specifically target Hispanic students at your high school.

Appendix E

School District Counselor Interview Guide

Tell me about your role as a counselor in High School "A"

How long have you been a counselor?

How long have you been a counselor at this high school?

Tell me about your experience as a Counselor with regard to Hispanic students

What is your experience with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest challenge with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest success with Hispanic students?

Tell me about students of High school "A" going to college?

What is your perception of High School "A" attending college?

Are systems in place to ensure students attend college?

Are there colleges/universities that partner with High School "A"?

What is your knowledge of the partnership with colleges/universities?

Have you ever met with these higher education partners?

Describe the college ready programs that specifically target Hispanic students at your high school.

Appendix F

High School Principal Interview Guide

Tell me about your role as a principal in High School "A"

How long have you been a principal?

How long have you been a principal at this high school?

Tell me about your experience as a Principal with regard to Hispanic students

What is your experience with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest challenge with Hispanic students?

What do you view as the greatest success with Hispanic students?

Tell me about students of High school "A" going to college?

What is your perception of High School "A" attending college?

Are systems in place to ensure students attend college?

Are there colleges/universities that partner with High School "A"?

What is your knowledge of the partnership with colleges/universities?

Have you ever met with these higher education partners?

Describe the college ready programs that specifically target Hispanic students at your high school.

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